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DAYS IN THE SUN

BOOKS BY NEVILLE CARDUS

★

Days in the Sun
The Summer Game
Good Days
Australian Summer
English Cricket

★

Ten Composers
Autobiography

DAYS IN THE SUN

A CRICKETER'S BOOK

NEVILLE CARDUS

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THE GREATEST TEST MATCH

On a bright day in the spring of 1921 I went to Lord's, hoping to see the first practice of the Australians. But the place was deserted, save for the man at the gates. He told me Armstrong's men were being entertained that afternoon somewhere in the City, and that they wouldn't be in the nets till after tea. Still, he added, with a touch of human nature not too common at Lord's, if I liked I could enter the ground and sit and enjoy myself in the sun till they came.

I sat on a bench with my feet spread out so that they touched the soft grass. A great calm was over the field. The trees beyond the Nursery were delicate with fresh green, and the fine old pavilion seemed to nod in the sunshine. It was an occasion for a reverie, and I fell to affectionate thoughts upon the great days of cricket, of the history that had been made on the field which stretched before me. I thought of Grace, of Spofforth, of Hornby, of A. G. Steel. . . . Maybe I dozed for a while. Then I was conscious of a voice. 'Would you mind moving up a little? This seat is rather congested.' I looked around and saw sitting by my side a man in a tight black coat which buttoned high on his chest. He had sidewhiskers and wore a low turned-down collar and a high bowler hat. A handkerchief was showing from a breast pocket in his jacket. Not quite awake yet, I moved up. 'Thank you,' he said. 'I'm sorry I disturbed you. A nap carries one comfortably through a long wait at these matches. What a crowd there is!' I looked round. I was in the middle of a big crowd indeed. In front of me sat a parson. He was reading *The Times*. I glanced over his shoulder and saw the headline: 'Egyptian Campaign: Sir G. Wolseley's Despatch.' The man at my side said, 'Were you here yesterday, sir?' and before I could reply he added,

'It was a considerable day's cricket, and the *Post* has an excellent account. Perhaps you've seen it?' He handed me a copy of the *Morning Post*, and, thanking him, I took it. The paper was dated August 29, 1882. In a column headed 'England *v.* Australia' I read that, on the day before, Australia had been dismissed for 63 by Barlow and Peate, and that England, captained by A. N. Hornby, had made in reply 101. Then I understood my situation. And what is more I now understood it without the slightest astonishment. Even the aspect of the ground, which told me it was Kennington Oval and not Lord's, did not embarrass me. It was enough that I was one of the crowd that was to witness the second day's cricket in the ninth Test match—the most famous Test match of all.

I gave the *Post* back to my companion in silence. 'A considerable day's cricket indeed, sir,' said the Parson. 'But England ought to have made more runs. Our batting was distinctly mediocre—almost as bad as the Australians'.' A loud cheer disturbed his argument. Down the pavilion steps walked the England Eleven in single file, led by Hornby. With him was 'W. G.,' and he passed along the field with an ambling motion, and the wind got into his great black beard. He spoke to Hornby in a high-pitched voice and laughed. Then he threw the ball to a tall, graceful player just behind him and cried, 'Catch her, Bunny.' Following Grace and Hornby were Lucas, C. T. Studd, J. M. Read, the Hon. A. Lyttelton, Ulyett, Barlow, W. Barnes, A. G. Steel, and Peate. The crowd quietened, awaiting the advent of Australia's first two batsmen, and I again heard the Parson's voice's '. . . The English total was distressingly poor. Rarely have I seen poorer batting from an All England Eleven. The fact is, sir, that for some little time now English cricket has been deteriorating. Our batsmen don't hit the ball as hard as they used to do, and even our

bowling. . . .' Another cheer drowned his discourse. 'Bannerman and Massie,' said my companion. 'I should imagine Bannerman's the youngest man in the match.' The Parson was prompt with his correction. 'I believe S. P. Jones, who was twenty-one on the 1st of the month, is the junior member of the two teams. Studd is, I fancy, eleven months older than Jones. Bannerman is twenty-three at least, and Giffen is six days younger than Bannerman.' My companion was silenced, but I ventured a question. 'How old is Spofforth?' Pat came the answer, 'Twenty-seven on the ninth of next month.'

The crowd, including even the Parson, went as quiet as a mouse as Barlow began the English bowling to Bannerman. Lyttelton, behind the wicket, crouched low. It was exactly a quarter past twelve. The next half-hour was a tumultuous prelude to the day. Bannerman was all vigilance, while Massie played one of the great innings of Test cricket. He hurled his bat at every ball the slightest loose, and his hits crashed ponderously to the boundary. He was the living image of defiance as he faced the Englishmen, glaring round the field his challenge. At one huge drive from Barlow's bowling my companion murmured, 'I've never seen a bigger hit than that at the Oval.' But the Parson overheard him. 'When the Australians were here in '78,' he said, 'W. H. Game, playing for Surrey, hit a ball from Spofforth to square-leg right out of the ground.' Still, he admitted that this Massie fellow hit them quite hard enough. In half an hour England's advantage of 38 was gone. Hornby called up bowler after bowler, Studd for Barlow, Barnes for Studd. Steel tried his hand at 56—the sixth bowler in less than three-quarters of an hour. When Australia's score was 47 Massie lifted a ball to long-on. 'Lucas is there,' said the Parson; 'he'll get it all r—. Good Lord!' For Lucas dropped the ball and blushed red as the crowd groaned out of its soul.

'Sixty-six for none,' murmured the man at my side; 'they're 28 on with all their wickets intact. If Massie prevails—ah, bravo, sir; well bowled, well bowled!' A ball from Steel had tempted Massie, and just as he jumped out it broke back and wrecked the wicket. Massie walked to the pavilion, roared home by an admiring but much relieved crowd. His innings was worth 55 to Australia, made out of 66 in less than an hour.

Bonnor came next, and the English out-fields dropped deep and had apprehensive thoughts. Would not Massie's example make this bearded giant a very Jehu? But Hornby has an inspiration. He asks Ulyett to bowl instead of Steel. And Ulyett moves to the wicket like a man ploughing against a breaker, puts the last ounce of his Yorkshire strength into a thunderbolt of a ball that sends Bonnor's middle stump flying. The crowd is only just getting back the breath lost in approval of this feat when Bannerman is caught by Studd at extra mid-off. Bannerman has batted seventy minutes for 13. 'Quick work for him!' says the Parson. And with the broad bat of Bannerman out of the way the English bowlers begin to see daylight. Peate's slow left-hand deliveries spin beautifully, as though controlled by a string. The Australians now, save Murdoch, are just guessing. The fourth wicket falls at 75, the fifth at 79. Australia are all out 122. 'Only 85 to win,' says the Parson. 'It's our game after all, though Lucas did his best to lose it.'

It was a true autumn afternoon going to its fall in grey light when 'W.G.' and Hornby went to the wicket to face Spofforth and Garratt. The crowd filled the ground, but so silent was it as Grace took his guard that one could hear the tink-tink of a hansom cab coming closer and closer along the Vauxhall Road. Spofforth's first over was fast—he let the ball go with a quick leap, dropping his arm at the moment of release. Blackham 'stood back' when Grace was

batting, but crept up for Hornby. 'Beautiful wicket-keeping,' murmured my companion. 'Pinder was not less gifted,' said the Parson. And he added, 'I have not seen Spofforth bowl as fast as this for some time. He has latterly cultivated medium-pace variations.' Both Hornby and Grace began confidently, and at once the tension lifted. Hornby made a lovely cut from Spofforth and a dainty leg stroke for a couple.

Spofforth uprooted Hornby's off stump with England's score 15, and with his next ball clean bowled Barlow. The crowd gave out a suspicion of a shiver, but the advent of bluff George Ulyett was reassuring, especially as Grace welcomed him with a fine leg hit from Garratt for three and a beautiful on drive to the boundary from Spofforth. 'Thirty up,' said my companion; 'only 55 to get.' England was still 30 for two when Spofforth crossed over to the pavilion end. Now I was behind his arm; I could see his superb break-back. And he bowled mainly medium pace this time. With each off-break I could see his right hand, at the end of the swing over, finish near the left side, 'cutting' under the ball. Sometimes his arm went straight over and continued straight down in the follow-through—and then the batsman had to tackle fierce top spin. There was the sense of the inimical in his aspect now. He seemed taller than he was a half-hour ago, the right arm of him more sinuous. There was no excitement in him; he was, the Parson said, cold-blooded. Still Ulyett faced him bravely while Grace, at the other end, time after time moved from his crease with a solid left leg and pushed the ball away usefully. 'Fifty up,' said my companion, 'for two wickets. It's all over—we want only 34 now.' And at 51 Spofforth bowled a very fast one to Ulyett, who barely snicked it. It served though; Blackham snapped the catch, and his 'Hzat!' was hoarse and aggressive. Lucas came in, and with two runs more 'W.G.'

was caught at mid-off. 'What a stroke!' said the Parson. 'I'm afraid he's not the Grace he was.' Four for 53, and Lyttelton and Lucas in. Lyttelton hits out big-heartedly, but the field is like a net tightly drawn. It is suddenly understood by every man of us that the game is in the balance. 'The wicket must be bad,' says somebody.

Lucas stonewalls, with a bat as straight as a die. Spofforth bowls a maiden; Boyle bowls a maiden; Spofforth bowls another maiden. The air is growing thick. 'Get runs or get out, for the Lord's sake,' says somebody. The field creeps closer and closer to the wicket. Spofforth and Boyle are like uncanny automatons, bowling, bowling, bowling. . . . Six successive maidens. 'This,' says the Parson, 'this is intolerable.' One's heart is aching for an honest boundary hit. . . . And the human bowling machines send down six more successive maidens. Think of it; twelve successive maidens, and the game in that state, the crowd in that purgatory. 'When Grace was a boy of eighteen I saw him make 50 on this very ground and he played every ball he got.' It was the Parson again, but now he sounded a little strained, a little unhappy. At the end of the twelfth successive maiden, a hit was purposely misfielded that Spofforth might have a 'go' at Lyttelton. The batsmen fell into the snare. Four more maidens, and spinning is Lyttelton's wicket. 'Anyhow, that's over and done with!' thankfully breathes the crowd. Better all be dead than dying! England five for 66—19 needed. Steel comes next and Lucas hits a boundary. Roars the crowd 'Bravo!' then catches breath. Steel caught and bowled Spofforth none—Maurice Read clean bowled second ball. England seven for 70. 'Incredible!' say 20,000 people in dismal unison. Barnes, the next man, hits a two. Thirteen to win. Heaven bless us, Blackham has blundered! He allows three byes. Run Barnes, run Lucas! Spofforth is inscrutable as the crowd

makes its noises. His next ball is too fast for eyes at the boundary's edge to see. Lucas comes down on it, though—hard, determined. And the ball rolls ever so gently on to the wicket and disturbs the bail. Poor Lucas bows his head and departs, and blasphemy is riot throughout the crowd and is communicated by stages to the outer darkness of Kennington Road. The stars are set against England—our cricketers are for the first time on English soil face to face with a victorious Australian XI. With ten to struggle for, Blackham catches Barnes off his glove, and the last man is here—poor Peate, who is the best slow bowler in England and not a bit more of a cricketer than that, and what good are his mysteries of spin now? Studd is there yet, though; only ten runs and it is our game. Perhaps *he*—Peate has hit a two. It was audacious, but maybe the ball was a safe one to tackle. A bad ball's a bad ball at any time. Peate has nerve (so we are telling ourselves, desperately): he's the right man: he'll play the steady game to good stuff and leave the job to Studd. . . . The stark truth is that Peate hit out wildly yet again at a slow from Boyle, missed it, and was bowled. There was a hollow laugh somewhere as the wicket went back, but whether it came from this world or the next I couldn't say. Studd did not get a ball. 'Why, man, did you try to hit: why couldn't you just stop them?' they asked Peate. 'Well,' he replied, 'I couldn't trust Maister Studd!'

As Peate's wicket was broken, ten thousand people rushed the rails and hid the green field. Spofforth was carried shoulder-high to the pavilion, and there the mob praised a famous man. I, too, wanted to get up and shout, but somehow I was rooted to my seat. I was probably the only man in that multitude on the pavilion not standing up, and as I sat there I had a strange sense of making a lonely hole in a solid black mass. The Parson was standing on the seat beside me. His boots were not more than two feet from

my eyes and I could see the fine ribbed work on the upper edge of the soles. The cheering came downwards to me, sounding remote. I lost grip on events. It seemed that I sat there till the ground was almost deserted, till over the field came a faint mist, and with it the vague melancholy of twilight in a great city. Time to go home, I thought . . . a great match . . . great days . . . great men . . . all gone . . . far away . . . departed glory. . . . A hand of someone touched my shoulder and I heard him say: 'The Orsetralians are on the way, and they'll be in the nets at four o'clock. Nice in the sun, isn't it?'

TOM RICHARDSON

On June 26th, 1902, Old Trafford was a place of Ethiopic heat, and the crowd that sat there in an airless world saw J. T. Tyldesley flog the Surrey bowlers all over the field. Richardson attacked from the Stretford end, and at every over's finish he wiped the sweat from his brow and felt his heart beating hammer strokes. Richardson had all his fieldsmen on the off-side, save one, who 'looked out' at mid-on. And once (and once only) he bowled a long hop to Tyldesley, who swung on his heels and hooked the ball high and far into the on-field. The Surrey fieldsman at mid wicket saw something pass him, and with his eye helplessly followed the direction of the hit. 'One boundary more or less don't count on a day like this,' it was possible to imagine the sweltering fellow telling himself. 'Besides, Johnny's plainly going to get 'em anyhow.' The ball slackened pace on the boundary's edge. Would it just roll home? The crowd tried to cheer it to the edge of the field. Then one was aware of heavy thuds on the earth. Some Surrey man, after all, had been fool enough to think a desperate spurt and a boundary saved might be worth while, blistering sun despite. Who on earth was the stout but misguided sportsman? Heaven be praised, it was Richardson himself. He had bowled the ball; he had been bowling balls, and his fastest, for nearly two hours. His labours in the sun had made ill those who sat watching him. And here he was, pounding along the out-field, after a hit from his own bowling. The writer sat on the 'popular' side, under the score-board, as the ball got home a foot in advance of Richardson. The impetus of his run swept him over the edge of the grass, and to stop himself he put out his arms and grasped the iron rail. He laughed—the handsomest laugh in the world—and

said 'Thank you' to somebody who threw the ball back to him. His face was wet, his breath scant. He was the picture of honest toil. With the ball in his hands again he trotted back to the wicket and once more went through the travail of bowling at J. T. Tyldesley on a pitiless summer's day.

This was Tom Richardson all over—the cricketer whose heart was so big that even his large body hardly contained its heroic energy. And this hot June morning the crowd mused about a day that had dragged out an intolerable length six years earlier—in 1896—on which England had struggled bitterly with Australia at Old Trafford, and Tom Richardson had touched as sublime a heroism as ever cricketer knew. This Manchester Test match of July, 1896, seems now to have been fought on so vast a scale that it might well be thought none but giants could have sustained the burden of it. Yet when Richardson's part in it is retold he was a very colossus that made pigmies of the others—made even Ranji a pigmy, despite that he played the innings of his life.

Australia batted first and scored 412. England—with Grace, Ranji, Stoddart, Abel, Jackson, J. T. Brown, Maclaren, Lilley, and Briggs to look to for runs—were all out for 231, and the Australian captain sent us in again. And once more the English cracks were reduced to littleness—all save Ranji, who, in Giffen's term, 'conjured' an innings of 154 not out, out of the total of 305. Australia needed 125 for victory—a mere song on the wicket. Old Trafford gave itself up to the doldrums as soon as Iredale and Trott had comfortably made a score or so without loss. Then it was that Richardson's face was seen to be grim—his customary happy smile gone. In Australia's first innings he had bowled 68 overs for seven wickets and 168 runs. Yet he was here again, bowling like a man just born to immortal energy.

And four Australian wickets were down for 45 in an hour. If only England had given the Australians a few more runs, the crowd wished out of its heart—if only Richardson could keep up his pace for another hour. But, of course, no man could expect him to bowl in this superhuman vein for long. . . . Thus did the crowd sigh and regret. But Richardson's spirit *did* go on burning a dazzling flame. The afternoon moved slowly to the sunset—every hour an eternity. And Richardson *did* bowl and bowl and bowl, and his fury diminished not a jot. Other English bowlers faltered, but not Richardson. The fifth Australian wicket fell at 79, the sixth at 95, the seventh at 100. The Australians now wanted 25, with only three wickets in keeping. McKibbin and Jones —two rabbits—amongst them. 'Is it possible?' whispered the crowd. 'Can it be? Can we win . . . after all?' . . . Why, look at Richardson and see: England must win. This man is going to suffer no frustration. He has bowled for two hours and a half, without a pause. He has bowled till Nature has pricked him with protesting pains in every nerve, in every muscle of his great frame. He has bowled till Nature can no longer make him aware that she is abused outrageously, for now he is a man in a trance, the body of him numbed and moving automatically to the only suggestion his consciousness can respond to—'England must win, must win, must win.' . . . With nine runs still to be got by Australia, Kelly gave a chance to Lilley at the wicket and Lilley let the ball drop to the earth. The heart of Richardson might have burst at this, but it did not. To the end he strove and suffered.

Australia won by three wickets, and the players ran from the field—all of them save Richardson. He stood at the bowling crease, dazed. *Could* the match have been lost? his spirit protested. Could it be that the gods had looked on and permitted so much painful striving to go by un-

rewarded? His body still shook from the violent motion. He stood there like some fine animal baffled at the uselessness of great strength and effort in this world. . . . A companion led him to the pavilion, and there he fell wearily to a seat. That afternoon Richardson had laboured for three mortal hours without rest. In the match he bowled 110 overs and three balls, for 13 wickets and 244 runs. He never bowled again in a Test match at Manchester.

This man Richardson was the greatest cricketer that ever took to fast bowling. Lockwood had nicer technical shades than Richardson—a guile which was alien to the honest heart of Richardson. But Lockwood had not a great spirit. He was a bowler at the mercy of a mood; an artist with an artist's capriciousness. Richardson bowled from a natural impulse to bowl, and whether he bowled well or ill that impulse was always strong. His action moved one like music because it was so rhythmical. He ran to the wicket a long distance, and at the bowling crease his terminating leap made you catch breath. His break-back most cricketers of his day counted among the seven wonders of the game. He could pitch a ball outside the wicket on the hardest turf and hit the leg stump. The break was, of course, an action break; at the moment of 'release' his fingers swept across the ball and the body was flung towards the left. And his length was as true as Attewell's own. But who is going to talk of Richardson's art in terms of the 'filthily technical,' as Mr. Kipling would call it? His bowling was wonderful because into it went the very life-force of the man—the triumphant energy that made him in his heyday seem one of Nature's announcements of the joy of life. It was sad to see Richardson grow old, to see the fires in him burn low. Cricketers like Richardson ought never to know of old age. Every spring-time ought to find them newborn, like the green world they live in.

CRICKET FIELDS AND CRICKETERS

I

THERE is surely some interaction between a cricket team and the ground it mainly lives on—does not the play of the side assume tone and colour from the scene? Yorkshire cricket has the aspect of Bramall Lane and Leeds—dour, and telling of stern competitive life with smoke and real industry about. Can you imagine the shrewd Lancashire game quite at home under a June sky at the Saffrons? Does not there come through the cricket of Sussex the brown and sunny flavour of Eastbourne and Hove when the time of day is noon and the earth seems humming with heat? The plain homeliness of the Midlands is expressed by Leicestershire cricket: it has no airs and graces, no excessive refinements. See an innings by Cole, of Leicestershire, and you ought not to be long guessing from the smack of rotund nature about it that he has passed the main portion of his days in the sun on a field with rustic benches running intimately round. No, it is not mere fancy to say: 'Show me a cricket team in action and I'll tell you where is its native heath.'

Take Lord's, for example. The country spirit, the circumscribed life denoted by country, is not for Lord's. For your good cricketer the ends of the earth have come to a resting-point at Lord's, and wherever he may be at the fall of a summer's day his face should turn religiously towards Lord's. Lord's is the Cosmopolis of cricket. And which county do you find playing the bulk of its games at Lord's? Why, naturally enough, the team that, less than them all, gives us the definite county flavour. Middlesex has ever

been as cosmopolitan as Lord's itself—a side gathered from the earth's corners, West Indians, Australians, even Yorkshiremen! A man from Huddersfield sat in the crowd at Lord's a season or two ago, and as he watched Middlesex beating his own county he was stirred to a protective derision—a derision which he cultivated as balm for the wound that defeat at cricket must always bring to Yorkshiremen. 'Middlesex?' he asked of the throng around him. 'Wheer's Middlesex? Is it in Lundon?' His barb was well directed; London obliterates the county boundaries, and neither at Lord's nor at the Oval do you feel the clannishness that stings you in the atmosphere of Old Trafford or Bramall Lane. To be eloquent of authentic county demands a certain narrowness, a contentment with those things of the earth, and that part of the earth, which Providence has placed immediately at one's doorstep. County means nature—and at Lord's cultivation borne on the winds of the world has rather expelled nature. Watch Hearne move fastidiously towards a century; watch Bruce or Crutchley batting, and you are looking on cricket played in the drawing-room of civilized men and woman. And at those times when Bosanquet bowled at Lord's there came into the game the touch of exquisite decadence that marks a true Cosmopolis. Frankly, I have never yet been able to fix Hendren into my notion of Lord's; he is quite indecently provincial in his relish of a thumping boundary.

There is, of course, in the life of a cultivated cricketer little that is sweeter than a summer morning at Lord's, a morning when the sky is a blue awning blown out with soft wind, and the trees at the Nursery End make a delicate motion. 'The Nursery End at Lord's!' The phrase sets memory astir, for have we not read in days of old in those evening papers our boyish eyes scanned that 'Richardson went on at the Nursery End,' that 'Ranjitsinhji glanced

Noble to the rails at the Nursery End'? Because Max Beerbohm has never written an essay called 'Going to Lord's on a July Morning' we have proof he has never in his life walked down the St. John's Wood Road with a day of cricket in sunny weather before him. But perhaps it is not given to the man who lives only round the corner from Lord's and can visit it every day to feel its appeal as keenly as the man from the North, who not more than three or four times a year walks down the St. John's Wood Road. Let the morning be quiet and mellow and there seems in the air about the St. John's Wood Road, at least to one not too familiar with the place, a sense of the dead old days, causing a melancholy which no doubt one ought to be ashamed of. The mind is made by this something in the St. John's Wood air to play with fancies of Victorian greatness hanging about the spot; of a gleaming hansom cab at the entrance and a black-bearded man, looking mountainous in everyday clothes, getting out while folk standing round murmur '"W.G."!'; of simple-faced men in wide, uncreased trousers proceeding along the pavement—the names of them, likely enough, Lockwood, Lohmann, Richardson—all keen to 'get at the old 'un.' No lover of cricket as he wanders about Lord's can very well keep the thought of Grace from his mind, for though Grace was a Gloucestershire man surely he larded the green earth at Lord's till the very spirit of him may be said to have gone into the grass. You see, just as Lord's is too large in spirit to stand for any one county or for any one space of time in cricket's history, so did the amplitude of Grace transcend Gloucestershire and his little day. At Lord's, with a June morning spending its warmth, one feels a kind of resentment that there should ever have been a bourne put by nature on W.G.'s capacity to endure and play the game till he was utterly tired of it. Is not Lord's here for him now just as ever it was, and a

summer day here also, one so fresh that it casts clean out of the understanding the thought of years that pass away? Why should it ever happen to a cricketer that a June morning comes on which the sun begins in the old comfortable way to climb the sky, and Lord's stands in the light, full of summer-time animation, and he no longer there to know of it?

II

Leave Lord's one day and to-morrow discover Bramall Lane and you enter another world. Frankly, the cricket field at Sheffield is a blasted heath, but, as Shakespeare knew, it is on blasted heaths that matters of grim moment come to pass. A Lancashire and Yorkshire match is not to be thought of at Lord's; here at Sheffield the scene tells a plain tale of the stiff energy of North Country life, and it provides the right setting for a battle between ancient hosts where the informing spirit is of a dour and combative blood feud. Squat chimneys outside the ground loom black, and even on a Bank Holiday the air contains a hint of furnaces and steel smelters. And to the man who likes his cricket moving dramatically on the right stage the Bramall Lane crowd is a work of art. It is a multitude which seemingly throws out a white heat and causes the game to boil over prodigiously. Who at Sheffield on Whit Monday in 1922 will ever forget the great crowd that watched Yorkshire struggling for a first innings' advantage over Lancashire the day long? It was a crowd unashamedly partisan. No room had the red-hot ranks for the equanimity that can look on an issue and say: 'May the best side win.' This vast gathering lived the violent afternoon through to one thought, to one thought alone: 'Down with Lancashire. Trample the Red Rose in the dust.' Here we had a partisan temper which sought to persuade events in Yorkshire's way. There was

surely not a man on Bramall Lane's desolate plain that afternoon who would not have held up his hands to the sky till pain scourged him had he believed that such a martyrdom would keep the hurly-burly favourable to his county. Not magnanimous, you might well say; still, there is an aspect to partisanship as brittle as this which is not entirely to be despised. If the Sheffield crowd cannot attend to the amenities at the sight of an advance by the ancient foe, if it is driven in the hour of Yorkshire's adversity to a fury and apprehension that have no use for a magnanimous admiration of the skill of the conquerors, we may wish ourselves far away from such a crowd, and thank our stars cricket does not breed many like it, but we certainly cannot deny that here is 'character,' here is rich red blood and abundant spirit.

I have heard folk from the South say of cricket at Sheffield that it simply is *not* cricket. Their preference has been for the game as it is played with trees and country graciousness around. But why put a limit to cricket's appeal; why deny her infinite variety? Lancashire and Yorkshire at Bramall Lane is not less cricket than any match in an old meadow at Little Slocombe on the laziest day in June. Cricket, indeed, has many facets; it can satisfy most of the human animal's interests and emotions, and, as we have seen, it is sensitive to most of our moods and our habitations. It can stir one, at Sheffield, into a very man of war; it can soothe one, at Tonbridge, to the sweetest peace. In turn, it can sound a clarion note that sets the combative spirits in the blood running agog like hey-go-mad, as Tristram Shandy would say; and in turn it can capture the summer's own music.

III

Kent cricket, as you may see from a mile's distance, was born of Canterbury and Tonbridge—an innings by Woolley is a pastoral. And those who have Miss Mitford's eyes for the summer game will find cricket at Worcester lovable. The pretty field there, true, is overshadowed by the town and its industry, but all the bricks and mortar of the place are huddled at one side cosily, and there is the cathedral to look at. The Worcester cricket ground is in the midst of meadow-land; the scent of grass is here all day and a wide space of sky above. Here a cricket-lover may seek out a corner of the field, lie down at full length and watch the game from a distance. (There is some enchantment about watching the movements of men in white through the sun's haze from a long way off.) And well does Worcestershire cricket suit countryside ease and humour. It is even a virtue in a place so full of green loveliness as this that Worcestershire often cannot play severely expert first-class cricket. The rough conflict of the championship manner would seem surely to mock Worcester's drowsy landscape. This is a cricket field apt for the country club game, and it is the happy country club cricket Worcestershire plays.

Looked at from strict first-class standards, Worcestershire's bowling these last few years has been rather a joke. Better far to look at it from the tolerant country club view. Let us talk of the Worcestershire bowlers not with the names they are known by in the list of first-class averages, but by names like Smith, Jones, Brown, and Robinson—all names of jolly good fellows for a country club match. Smith we all know; he possesses strong views on the leg-break, but somehow it never comes off 'in the middle.' Jones has a complete mastery over the principles of the googly—in the smoke-room when he is playing matches

over again in reminiscent mood. Brown once got a wicket against the M.C.C., and of course there is always a chance that he will some day do it again. And Robinson boasts an ability to swerve with a new ball; he goes on at the outset of the innings, and will be ready again when the 200 is up! How they must enjoy their summers down at Worcester!

IV

The world of Kent and Worcestershire cricket and the world of Yorkshire cricket might appear far apart, yet Lancashire manages to make the best of both. At Old Trafford the game has a hearty sportsmanship, yet this is an efficiently ordered ground, which never lets you forget that Manchester knows a thing or two about getting and spending. Old Trafford, like Lancashire cricket, is both utilitarian and human. Makepeace, who plays the game as a machine might play it, is at home at Old Trafford, but so was Johnny Briggs, a cricketer who was always smiling. Old Trafford possesses a nice name, and more of the open air gets into it than into Kennington Oval, for there still are fields outside Old Trafford, so that its beautiful stretch of turf does not cause you to ask, as the turf at the Oval does: 'How on earth did it get here?'

The Old Trafford crowd is fond of Lancashire cricket, but not so jealous of it that there will not be generous applause for a triumphant invading host. When Lancashire collapses the Old Trafford crowd will simply curse the county players heartily for a while and ease its heart that way. But at Leeds one afternoon, when Yorkshire collapsed against Notts, though the crowd took a rather lasting sorrow with it to tea, no word of complaint or distrust was uttered against Yorkshire cricket. There, in a word, is the difference between a Lancashire crowd's regard for its county XI and the Yorkshire crowd's. The one is based on

the notion that after all cricket is only a game and hence need not ever be an occasion for a gnashing of teeth; the other sees in cricket—that is, in Yorkshire cricket—one of the finer passions of life, a possession of the clan not to be rudely handled. The Yorkshireman's intolerance of an enemy's prowess is simply the measure of the Yorkshireman's pride in his county's genius for cricket.

The Australians find the best light in the country at Old Trafford—no nonsense about waving trees there! And at Old Trafford the Australians have made history. The writer, for one, will always remember Armstrong sitting on the grass at Old Trafford, refusing to go on with the game until the crowd, which was in a bad temper, for a wonder, stopped barracking him. He will also never forget the innings Darling played at Old Trafford in the 1902 Test match—a small innings numerically, but how lion-hearted! It was a day of lowering clouds and Australia was in an awkward situation. Darling came in and played a death or glory innings, the fitful sun glinting on his bat. Not in great Test matches, though, has Old Trafford found its true heart, but when Hornby and Barlow were at the wicket and we all looked devotedly on as 'the run-stealers flickered to and fro.' Perhaps Old Trafford is less Lancashire than Manchester; there is not much in its prosperous shape—the pavilion is the image in stone and mortar of your successful Manchester man—that tells of the county's scrambling little mill towns where cobbled streets go up and down hill. None the less it is more like Lancashire county than Kennington Oval is like Surrey county. For if Lord's is cosmopolitan, the Oval is distinctly metropolitan. One of the ironies of the game, surely, is that Surrey, with its hills and downs, has in cricket come to be associated with Kennington and a setting of bleak tenements and confident announcements (on hoardings) about somebody's pale ale and

dry gin. Little of breezy country air passes over the Oval. And so, because the Oval incessantly comes to mind when one thinks of Surrey cricket, one is driven to thinking of the Surrey team as made up wholly of the stuff of Cockaigne. Bobby Abel was the personification of Surrey cricket seen through the air of the Oval; the pert lift of the cap on his head, the slick dexterity of his play, with bat at an impudent angle—all these gave cricket a Cockney accent. Poor Tom Richardson, with his sun-tanned face and black hair, was, I can hardly think, rarely in his heart's home with the odours of modern Vauxhall about him. Why cannot Surrey find for occasions a pleasant field somewhere, say, near Cranleigh?

V

Nottinghamshire cricket has never been unfaithful to Trent Bridge. That perfect pitch at Trent Bridge went a long way towards the making of the Nottinghamshire cricket tradition. For on a cushion of Trent Bridge marl, batsmanship was tempted to proceed comfortably along the lines of least resistance. The poor bowler was at a discount at Trent Bridge in fine weather; no long and keen challenge was sent from him to the batsman. 'Keep your wickets up, lads, and runs will come,' seems usually to have been the easy philosophy of Nottinghamshire cricketers—dwellers for a season's better part on Trent Bridge, a Lotos-land for batsman, a place where it was always afternoon and 360 for 2 wickets. That guileless turf at Nottingham accounted for Shrewsbury, whose every innings was the stately blank verse of batsmanship; accounted for Attewell, pitching the ball on a sixpenny piece's circumference till soothing monotony came over the onlooker; accounted for Scotton, the stonewaller: 'Block, block, block at the foot of thy wicket, O Scotton!' In its heyday Nottinghamshire cricket was fit

for heaven and eternity. You could admire it like unflawed marble, but being human, you could not live with it for long. How powerfully the Trent Bridge pitch contributed to the cold Nottinghamshire cricket tradition of the past may best be understood if we look at the doings of the Nottinghamshire XI in 1907—a wet summer. In that season Notts won the championship by cricket as brilliant as Kent cricket. The rain took from the Trent Bridge wicket its customary easefulness; no longer could a batsman dawdle on it all day while his score mounted almost without a thought from him, his innings growing in the warmth like a plant. No; he had now to get runs by art and quick wit against a spinning ball, and the Nottinghamshire XI responded beautifully to the stimulus of the new environment. To-day, one believes, the wicket at Trent Bridge is no longer as delicately nurtured on marl as it was in the old times: Nature in the grass is given a better chance of asserting herself. If this is the truth, we can hardly put it down to accident that nowadays Nottinghamshire cricket has perhaps a more lively habit of mind, a freer gait than ever it had; that A. W. Carr, wearing the mantle of A. O. Jones, is leading his batsmen from its ancient flat lands to slopes romantically uneven.

VI

You can't get away from it—cricket does turn sensitively to sun and the setting, moves to the passing of summer in England. True, they play cricket in Australia and South Africa; the game, in fact, has gone round the wide world. But not in the lands of dry light and parched brown earth is cricket the game we know and love here. Cricket as a combat and as a display of skill would be fascinating in the Sahara, no doubt; in England only does the soul of it unfold. You have never even wooed cricket, let alone won it,

if you have looked on the game merely as a clever matter of bat and ball which, given a fine day and expert players, might be appreciated at any time of the year like football, which is as good to watch in December as in April or May. One, indeed, has heard folk ask for winter cricket, to be played in some glass-domed Olympia brilliant with electric light. The cricketer of soul knows better than this. He knows that whoever would appreciate cricket rightly must have a sense, as he sits in the sun (there can be no real cricket without sunshine), that he is simply attending to one part, and just one part, of the pageant of summer as it slowly goes along, and yet a part as true to summer as villages in the Cotswolds, stretches of gleaming meadow-land, and pools in the hills. Cricket in high summer is played with the mind of the born lover of it conscious the whole time that all this happy English life is around him—that cricket is but a corner in the teeming garden of the year. Pycroft in *The Cricket Field* writes of 'those sunny hours . . . "when the valleys laugh and sing," ' and plainly the memories of them as he wrote his book were as memories of some sweet distillation of cricket itself. You see, at cricket there is a chance to bask in a comprehension of the summer-time setting and spirit; the game more often than not is a leisurely game. And so the watcher may be mindful, as the men in white come on to the field at the fresh of the morning, that the sun is beginning a lazy journey up the sky; that, while the game pauses in the hour for rest and lunch, the earth is smoking in the heat of noon; that at the fall of day, with its shadows and peaceful night—why, then the watcher of the game may also see the peach bloom come in evening skies. All things that matter are these to cricketers of heart and to our delectable game. Only on dull days and in dull places is cricket dull.

THINGS THAT MATTER

A WONDERFULLY English game is cricket. One morning last summer at Kennington Oval the umpires walked magnificently on to the field a few minutes behind the clock. Arrived at the wicket, one of them bowled a ball to the other—just to remind us, it seemed, that he, too, in his time had been a mighty hunter before the Lord. Then the Somersetshire men moved easefully into view, and, after another dignified lapse of time, out came two Surrey batsmen. Whereupon one of these engaged himself with the umpire over the urgent matter of taking his guard. It was easy to imagine the conversation: 'Middle and leg as usual, Tom.' 'That's the off stump.' 'How's this?' 'Covers the leg.' 'That better?' 'Covers the two, 'Arry.' 'Thanks, Tom.' Meanwhile the captain of Somersetshire, in earnest consultation with the bowler, had been waving his fieldsmen here and there; a gesture from him and some man in white passed far away into the bleak distances of the Oval field. And all the time the crowd waited. And at length the game went on. And the first ball, bless us, upset a wicket which was the last Surrey wicket of the innings. Whereupon the cricketers all moved out of our ken once more, the umpires last and looking impressive—Dogberrys of the cricket field! And the vast spaces of the Oval were empty again. Such is cricket—one sane thing, anyhow, in our mad world. Cricket, obstinately declining to take part in the general movement to brighten old England out of existence! Did the crowd at the Oval complain bitterly at this dilly-dallying of cricket, this lack of 'dynamic sweep,' as the man in *Kipps* would say? It did not. It watched the comings and the goings of the cricketers devotedly, and it filled the blanks in the play with its own humanity. As the crowd waited for the game to stir

into life in time it expanded into reminiscence. One man informed us—rather, he threw the news upon the morning air negligently—that he had witnessed Bobby Abel score 357 not out for Surrey against this very county of Somersetshire in May, 1899; he thought it was May but wouldn't swear to it. And another man informed us, but not negligently at all, that he had witnessed every run that Bobby Abel had ever scored in his life at Kennington Oval, so help him if he hadn't. This announcement was not, I think, widely accepted, but none the less the crowd was amenable; in its cosily huddled ranks fellow-feeling ran warm. This in spite of cricket which apparently seemed to stand in need of the 'brightening' process the newspapers a year or two ago told us was the only means of saving the game's life.

The fact is, cricket is more than a game. For one thing, it is part of summer. How many of us have gone home after watching cricket and taken with us no impression more likeable than that we have seen during the day the sun climb up the sky, pause over us for a while in beneficent noon heat, and then descend towards evening while the field turned a softer and softer green? The leisureliness of cricket, the room in it for graces and amenities deliciously irrelevant!—all these make for the poetry of cricket; yes, and make for the urbane Charles Lamb prose of cricket. And it is these graces of cricket that the literature of the game has not attended to amply enough in recent days; we have made, perhaps, overmuch of the technique of cricket. In the first year of the game after the war the cry was: 'Speed up cricket!' *The Times* came out with an ingenious suggestion involving the banishment of the left-handed batsman because he interferes with bustle. But we are finding out, at last, that the summer game is not as other games; that the rhythm of it may be as lazy as June's and yet enchant us. Why, only the other day *The Times* itself printed a graceful prose poem

in praise of those very parts of cricket which are not to be got into a matter-of-fact inventory of a match.

Think only of the crowd at cricket! The crowd matters a deal to the game and to one's love of the game. And it really is part and parcel of cricket; you will find nothing like it at other games. It sits for so long a time in one place that personal reserves cannot exist in it: in a cricket crowd an intimacy is bred which breaks down all class distinctions. And because cricket frequently takes a placid course the crowd has liberty for self-expression. Think of it—twenty thousand men (and some women), most of them certain to possess a share of the more or less shabby worries that afflict the race nowadays—they will sit in the air, throughout the long day, attending on a game that can charm but can hardly inebriate! The foreigner may well gasp at the spectacle of Lord's on a Saturday afternoon in June. Go about the 'popular' side on any county cricket ground and you are with the salt of the earth. A man is talking of Parkin; he knows him, meets Parkin every morning. He has the ear of the multitude, but, such is life, the voice of the sceptic is sure to be heard in the land. 'You know Parkin—I'll *bet* yer do!' No more words than these, but enough to spoil the day of the man who claims he knows Parkin. That he has the confidence of the majority about him is now nothing—ashes are in his mouth. Romance demands complete and intimate faith! And again, there is the fellow who turns up late in the day, say, at a Lancashire and Yorkshire match in the present year of grace, and turns up slightly drunk. He contemplates the cricket for a while with a hard gaze and suddenly unlooses the question: 'Wish—wish ish John'y Briggsh?' Somebody endeavours to adjust his historical sense. He is informed that Johnny Briggs no longer is in the land of the living, that we are now in 1924. This information, though put in more emphatic terms than those

used here, has no considerable effect on the seeker for knowledge. He goes into meditation; again he looks hard at the cricket. And at last, with a curiosity as fresh and genial as ever, asks: 'Wish—wish ish John'y Briggsh?' Would not a cricket crowd have moved the warm heart of Henry Fielding to more and more warmth? Would he not have loved to come on that common enough scene on the 'shilling side' of a county ground, wherein individuals hot with futile argument grow stern in language because argument is futile? 'I tell yer 'e played for Essex in 'ninety-five.' 'Played for Essex—played for Essex! 'Ow could 'e 'ave played for Essex in 'ninety-five when 'e played for Kent?' 'Don't I tell yer 'e played for *Essex* in 'ninety-five?' And so they go on, round and round in a circle. And language gets sterner and sterner. And in the very heart of the argument, and the language, sits a parson, who most accommodatingly tries to look either stone-deaf or a jolly enough fellow of the world, in his own way, as any of 'em. . . . It is not to the point to say that this crowd is not strictly a part of cricket because also it goes to football matches. It has to go somewhere in the winter! It is of the game—the part which adds the salt touch to a dish that without it might seem a little precious; cricket, a poem of a game, is kept by the crowd on the good round earth. Things that matter are all these—the runs and the stumps upset and the fielding; the 'wigs on the green,' the championship; the summer setting; the urbanities, the crowd and its humours, and the airs and graces—all these are parts of cricket, and no part greater than the whole. Brighten cricket? Then seek to brighten the comfortable sun. Tired of cricket? Then you are tired not only of a graceful game but of summer and communion with fellows of excellent heart.

BY THREE RUNS

(The Greatest Test Match at Old Trafford)

THE most thrilling finish of all the Test matches ever fought at Old Trafford happened on the Saturday afternoon of July 26th, 1902. It was the decisive game of the rubber, and Australia won it by three runs, snatching the spoils from the lion's mouth. The match at the end seemed to get right out of the control of the men that were making it; it seemed to take on a being of its own, a volition of its own, and the mightiest cricketers in the land looked as though they were in the grip of a power of which they could feel the presence but whose ends they could not understand. As events rushed them to crisis even Maclaren, Ranjitsinhji, Trumper, Noble, and Darling—most regal of cricketers—could only utter: 'Here we do but as we may; no further dare.' The game, in Kipling's term, was more than the player of the game.

The match was designed, surely, by the gods for their sport. Even the victors were abominably scourged. On the second day, when the issue was anybody's, Darling played an innings which, as things turned out, must be said to have won Australia's laurels as much as anything else. Australia in their second innings had lost 3 wickets—those of Trumper, Duff, and Hill—for 10 runs and now possessed an advantage worth no more than 47. Under a sky of rags, the fitful and sinister sunlight coming through, Darling let all his superb might go at the English attack. His hitting had not the joyfulness of mastership in it; its note was desperation. He plainly felt the coils of circumstance about him; he plainly was aware of the demon of conflict that had the game in grip. And the defiant action of his bat was like a fist

shaken at the unfriendly heavens. It was in this innings of Darling's that the gods played their first cruel trick. For with Darling's score only 17 he was impelled to sky a ball to the deep field—a high but easy catch. And who was the wight that the ironic powers had decreed should shoulder the responsibility of taking that crucial catch? His name was Tate—Tate of Sussex, a kindly fellow who never did harm to a soul. The humour of the gods really began when this cricketer was asked to play for England instead of George Hirst. Tate was a capital bowler, but as soon as he was seen in the company of the great the question went out: 'What is he doing in this galley?' Tate had not the stern fibre of character that can survive in an air of high tragedy; his bent was for pastoral comedy down at Horsham. Tate missed the catch, and never looked like holding it. As he stood under the ball, which hung for a while in the air—an eternity to Tate—and then dropped like a stone, his face turned white. Darling survived to make 37 out of a total of 86. Had Tate held the catch Australia could hardly have got a score of more than 50, for Lockwood and Rhodes, that Friday afternoon, bowled magnificently. Yet when Tate laid himself down to rest in the evening, can he not be imagined as saying to himself: 'Well, it's nearly all over now, and as far as Tate of Sussex is concerned, the worst must have happened. I never *asked* to play for England—they thrust greatness on me—and I'll be well out of it this time to-morrow, back to Brighton, and who'll remember my missed catch after a week? What's a muff in the field in a cricketer's career—everybody makes them.' If Tate did console his spirit in this way the poor man did not know he was born. The gods had not finished with him; the next day he was to be put on the rack and have coals of fire heaped on his head.

On the Saturday England were left with 124 to get for victory. A tiny score—with the cream of batsmanship at

hand. But there had been five hours of rain in the night, and Trumble and Saunders were bowling for Australia. Still, England seemed nicely placed at lunch; the total 36 for none and Maclaren and Palairet undefeated. The crowd took its sustenance light-heartedly; everybody lived at ease in a fool's paradise as rosily lighted as Tate's. Here, again, was the humorous touch of the gods: men that are taken suddenly out of contentment are the more likely to writhe in Gehenna. After lunch the sun got to work on the wicket, and straightway Palairet was bowled by an intolerable break from Saunders. Tyldesley came in, and, with Maclaren, the game was forced. The play of these two batsmen gave the crowd the first hint that all was not yet settled in England's favour, for it was the play of cricketers driven to desperate remedies. The runs, they seemed to say, can only be got if we hurry; there's the sun as well as Trumble and Saunders to frustrate. Tyldesley jumped to the bowling; he hit 16 runs in quick time before he was caught in the slips. England 68 for 2—56 wanted now. And, said the crowd, not yet sniffing the evil in the wind, *only* 56, with Ranji, Abel, Jackson, Braund, and Lilley to come, to say nothing of Rhodes and Lockwood. Why, the game is England's! Four runs after Tyldesley's downfall Maclaren was caught by Duff in the long field. An indiscreet stroke, yet whose was the right to blame the man for making it? It had come off time after time during his priceless innings of 35, and England could not afford to throw a single possible run away. Maclaren had played like a gambler at a table—not looking as though he were making runs, but rather as one who had ample boundaries at his bat's end to bank on every throw of the dice.

Abel and Ranji were in when at last the multitude unmistakably saw the evil day face to face. For what sort of a Ranji was this? Palsy was on him. You could have sworn

that he shook at the knees. It looked like Ranji; his shirt rippled in the wind even as it did on that day at Old Trafford six years earlier than this, the day on which he conjured 154 runs out of the Australians. Yes, it looked like Ranji—the same slight body, the same inscrutable, bland face. Alas! the spirit had gone—here was a deserted shrine. Thousands of eyes turned away from Ranji and looked to Abel for succour. Ah, this is better—the pertness of little Abel lightened the soul. He made gallant runs—a boundary over Hill's head. 'Cheeky' work this—batsmanship with *gaminerie*. 'Bravo, Bobby!' shouted the Old Trafford crowd. At 92 Ranji was out, leg-before-wicket to Trumble. Well, the sophist crowd told itself, that was bound to happen; he never looked good for any at all. But 5 runs more and Trumble bowled Abel. England 97 for 5—27 needed. 'It's quite all right,' said a parson on the half-crown stand; 'there's really no cause for anxiety. To doubt the ability of Jackson, Braund, Lilley, Lockwood, and Rhodes to get a paltry 27 runs would be scandalous. Besides, I do believe that fellow Tate is a batsman—he has an average of 16 for Sussex.' The century went up with cheers to herald it—the crowd made as much of joyful noise as it could, presumably in the hope that cheering would put a better face on the scoring-board. Jackson, who made a century in the first innings, scored seven in his best 'Parliamentary' manner—neat, politic runs. Then he was caught by Gregory, and now the cat was indeed out of the bag; sophistry passed away from the heaped-up ranks. 'Who'd 'a' thowt it?' said a man on the sixpenny side. Who, indeed? At that very moment of agony at Old Trafford, people far away in the city read in the latest editions, 'England 92 for 3,' and agreed that it wasn't worth the journey to Old Trafford, that it had been a good match, that the Australians were fine sportsmen, and jolly good losers.

Sixteen runs—four good boundaries or four bad ones—would bring the game into England's keeping when Lilley reached the wicket.

He was frankly and unashamedly in some slight panic. He hit out impetuously, as who should say: 'For the Lord's sake let it be settled and done with quickly.' Braund was overthrown at 109, and Lockwood made not a run. Lilley lashed his bat about like a man distraught. Rhodes is his companion now, and stands on guard ever so cool. Eight runs will do it, and 'There goes four of them!' affirms the red-hot crowd as Lilley accomplishes a grand drive into the deep. 'Well hit, sir!' shouts our parson. 'Nothing like taking your courage in both hands against these Australian fellows. Well hit, sir!' Clem Hill is seen running along the boundary's edge as though the fiend were after him. Trying to save the four, is he?—even from as certain a boundary hit as this! Extraordinary men, Australians; never give anything away. Hill, in fact, saved the boundary in the most decisive manner in the world by holding the ball one-handed before it pitched. The impetus of his run carried him twenty yards beyond the place where he made the catch—a catch which put incredulity into the face of every man and woman at Old Trafford that day. 'A sinful catch,' said the parson. Tate, the last man in, watched Rhodes ward off three balls from Trumble, and then rain stopped play. Yes, rain stopped play for forty minutes—and England eight runs short of triumph with the last men in. But though it was heavy rain there was always a bright sky not far away—another piece of subtle torture by the gods, for nobody could think that the weather was going to put an end to the afternoon. It would clear up all right in time; the agony had to be gone through. The crowd sat around the empty field, waiting, but hardly daring to hope. The tension was severe. Yet surely there were calm minds here and there. Why,

under a covered stand sat two old gentlemen who were obviously *quite* indifferent to the issue. One was actually reading to the other the leading article from one of the morning papers. Moreover, he was reading it in a controlled and deliberately articulated voice. 'Sir M. Hicks-Beach argued yesterday,' he read, 'that even if Ireland was overtaxed in 1894, its grievance was less to-day, because taxation had not increased quite so rapidly in Ireland as in the United Kingdom.' And the other old gentleman, so far was he from troubling his head needlessly over a mere cricket match, promptly took up the points in the argument, and he too spoke in a perfectly controlled and deliberately articulated voice. 'Two wrongs,' he commented, 'do not make a right.' Excited about England and Australia? Not a bit of it, sir! We trust we are old and sensible enough to put a correct valuation on a game of cricket.

In the pavilion Tate was dying a thousand deaths. All depended on him—Rhodes was safe enough. In his head, maybe, notions went round and round like a wheel. 'You've only to keep your bat straight,' he might well have said to himself time after time. 'Don't even move it from the blockhole. I've heard tell if you keep your bat quite still it's a thousand to one against any ball hitting the wicket.' . . . At six minutes to five the Australians went into action again. Saunders bowled at Tate—a fast one. Tate saw something hit the ground and he made a reflex action at it. Click! Tate looked wildly around him. What had happened? A noise came to him over the wet grass, sounding like a distant sea. The crowd was cheering; he had snicked a boundary. Another snick like that and the game is England's and Tate safe for posterity! The ball was returned from the ring, and Darling slightly but impressively rearranged his field, the while Saunders bent down to a sawdust heap. Bloodless, calculating Australians they were. Tate got himself down

on his bat once more, and the wheel in his poor head went round faster and faster. '. . . Bat straight . . . don't move . . . can't hit wicket . . . block-hole . . . don't move. . . . Bat straight . . . can't hit wicket. . . .' And the gods fooled him to the top of his bent—to the last. Saunders's fourth ball was not only good enough for Tate's frail bat; it was good enough for the best bat in England. It was fast through the air and—it was a shooter. It broke Tate's wicket, and, no doubt, broke Tate's heart and the heart of the crowd.

In twenty minutes Old Trafford was deserted save for one or two groundsmen who tended to the battlefield. The figures on the score-board had revolved, obliterating all records of the match from the face of it, which now looked vacantly over the grass. The gods had finished their sport—finished even with Tate. Yet not quite. A week later, on the Saturday afternoon following this, Tate met the Australians again in his beloved Sussex, and he was graciously permitted to play an innings of 22 not out against them—and a capital innings at that.

THE BATTLE OF WITS

THE history of our summer game has been one long battle of wits between batsman and bowler. To begin with no earlier instance than Grace: as soon as he drove fast bumpy stuff over our fields like a very Jehu, bowlers saw the vanity of speed and took to spin. The late 'eighties and 'nineties found pitches improving day by day, and in dry weather even spin was not enough. And while the theorists cudgelled brains to solve the stalemate now imminent, seemingly, between bat and ball, a Lohmann, a Trott, a Giffen was learning to circumvent the beautiful lawns, on which spin was almost harmless, by getting their wickets while the ball was still in the air; in other words, they were studying the arts of flight and pace-variation. The bowler possessing the craft of baffling his man before the ball pitched defeated not only the bat but also the immaculate turf.

But as more and more marl was sown into our pitches, and as footwork in batsmanship became more and more plastic and swift, even the changeful flight of a Lohmann could not hold back our Haywards and our Frys from mastery. Round about 1899–1902 the bat was beating the ball again, save on rainy days. Drawn games became almost a national scandal. And the pundits of the pavilion once more howled 'Stalemate!' and sought for some arbitrary act of legislation to put an end to the fresh deadlock. The stumps, we were told, must be made higher; some mammoth intellects suggested *four* wickets and a narrower bat. And while theory turned greyer and greyer over the dilemma, Hirst cultivated the swerve and Bosanquet the googly—both of these balls superb tricks even on the most flawless grounds.

The South Africans of 1907—Vogler, Faulkner, and White—out-Bosanqueted Bosanquet at bowling the

'wrong 'un'; in the track of Hirst came masters of curving flight like Arnold, Dean, Laver, F. R. Foster, to name at random only a few. In a season or two everybody was doing it. Confusion for a period was made for batsmanship. The old off-side play could no longer be safely trusted—you simply tempted Providence by hitting towards the covers at a ball swinging on to the leg stump; while, of course, the ancient and stately forward movement of a Hayward and a Gunn meant ruin against a googly, which was only to be discreetly countered by a back play so late that it permitted the ball to pitch and show the direction of its subtle finger spin. Both the swerve and the googly thrust batsmen back on their wicket, and, as a natural consequence, on-side strokes gained in power and variety, for most on-side strokes go easefully with the back method. Thus the battle of wits went once again in the batsman's favour; it was the bowler's next move.

Jacques, of Hampshire, jumped to the cue of the new situation with the alacrity of Catastrophe in the old comedy. He was a bowler commanding an in-swinging flight and an off-break. Both these balls, when they were conventionally deployed, played into the hands of batsmen strong in the back method and in on-side strokes. One step to the wicket's base, and you could hit them, *with* the spin or with the ball's line of flight, anywhere round about square-leg and mid-on—that is, supposing the fieldsmen were set, as at that time they invariably were, with still a number of them idle on the off-side, with great gaps between the leg-side scouts. But Jacques altered the pitch of his in-swinger and off-break and also the position of his field. In a word, he used what to-day we commonly call the 'leg theory.' His spin and swerve were dropped not *outside* the off stump, with the idea of hitting the wicket, but on the leg or middle stumps, the objective being to beguile batsmen to hit

catches to a ring of fieldsmen round the leg-side. Bowlers were quick to emulate this strategy, and so they killed two birds with one stone, so to speak. The batsmen found his pulls, glances, and hooks terribly cramped—for it was risky to try these hits from balls directed as Jacques was directing them, with his field placed as it was; moreover, it became almost impossible to tackle this sort of bowling by off-side batsmanship, for that involved hitting against the swerve or spin. All save batsmen of genius had now to be content mainly to wait for loose balls; the good balls were pushed for singles through the leg trap—when they did not get wickets. This, broadly speaking, was the state of affairs when the war came; it is, broadly speaking, the state of affairs to-day. Parkin, Root, Macaulay, Staples, Peach—all of these are leg-theory bowlers. Such an attack as this puts cover driving and cutting out of the game most days in a summer. Such an attack has placed batsmanship in chains; it has bred the two-eyed stance, which takes the left shoulder out of the position a good off-side hit demands. Leg-theory bowling, too, has driven batsmen to excessive pad play—to the so-called 'second line of defence.' Consequently bowlers are finding it easier to get men out leg-before-wicket to-day than at any other time in the history of cricket. Strange that at a moment like this critics should be expressing sympathy with the bowler whose break-back is stopped by the batsman's legs after it has pitched *off* the wicket and beaten the bat. Excessive pad play, so far from working injustice to bowlers, is getting them, as I have said, leg-before-wicket victims in plenty.

It is not that bowling is deadlier nowadays than it was, say, in the days of conventional off-spinners like Hearne and Wainwright. Who, indeed, would argue it was *half* as deadly? But it seems the truth that the modern leg-theory stuff limits scoring strokes abominably. One of our best

batsmen, a cricketer who piled up his thousands of runs in the pre-leg-theory era, told me not long ago that he nowadays finds the job of freely hitting runs difficult beyond anything in his experience. 'It may be easy to stay in,' he said, 'but it's hard to score.' Stalemate again! Bowlers will surely get tired of wheeling up maidens and waiting for batsmen to commit suicide. They will surely realize that as time goes on batsmen will be able to escape the leg trap by strictly Fabian methods, even if they cannot score in haste. A deadlock at cricket between bowler and batsman has not usually lasted for long—such is the keen spirit informing the game. The battle of wits will go on.

There is, as a fact, a way open already to the bowler for a *new* attack on a pretty weak flank of his ancient foe. As one has argued, off-side play in batsmanship at the moment is weak—it has been falling into disuse. Well, will not a bright lad of a bowler wake up some morning and say to himself: 'Eureka! Why should I go on attacking batsmen just where their strongest defences are? Why should I go on bowling into batsmen's legs and giving them just the very spin and flight that on-side strokes thrive on? Why not force batsmen to use their weakest strokes—the cut, the off-drive? Why not go back to the old-time assault on the off stump and strive to break the ball *away* towards the slips?' As a fact, a bright boy of a bowler has already had the sense to see how ripe is the hour for an attack exactly contrary in direction to the fashionable leg-theory stuff. Tate, of Sussex, not long ago, took more wickets than any other bowler in the land, and he tends to spin and 'flight' the ball away from the batsman instead of into him. When Wainwright, the old Yorkshire cricketer, was teaching the writer to bowl he would say scores of times in a season: 'Find out the batsman's poorest stroke and spin the ball against its direction.' The direction of the bulk of bowling to-day favours just

those strokes which average batsmen are able to exploit even yet; a renewed attack on the off stump will compel a return to the old stance with its free-swinging forward action. And while batsmen are getting hold once more of the ancient technique, no doubt bowlers will wax fat. But the ancient technique is not done with by far—give it the right attack and we shall see brilliance spilled over our fields as in the past. Bowlers, of course, will not stand humbly by at the revival of batsmanship's old glory; in time there will be another subtle move by them—perhaps back to the leg theory again, as soon as batsmen have forgotten its gins and snares. And so the battle of wits must persist, while philosophic watchers of cricket look on contentedly and say: 'Stroke, counter-stroke, and stroke. Trick for trick. The new confounding the old and the old confounding the new! For ever and ever—eternal recurrence in very truth!'

WOOLLEY: AN APPRECIATION

You must see Woolley batting on one of Kent's cricket fields to enjoy thoroughly the charm of his delightful art. Of course Woolley can spread beauty about him wherever he goes, but at Bramall Lane—even at Old Trafford—one thinks of him as one thinks of a butterfly in a city street on a summer's day. The writer once saw Woolley the batsman set ideally, and never will he forget it. It was while an August afternoon turned to evening in Kent. The tumult and the shouting of the day were over, and now we all sat in quiet, just waiting for stumps to be drawn while Kent played out time in the calm light. Woolley made gentle movements with his bat. His body would fall a little forward as he flicked a ball to the off-side; there seemed no weight in him when he negligently trotted down the pitch. And as the sun shone more and more aslant, the light seemed to put this batsmanship of Woolley's under a glass; we had cool and polished contours given to it, the hard outlines of reality were lost in soft shades. Woolley's batting is frequently called 'brilliant'; it is the wrong word for his art at any time. Brilliance hints at a self-conscious gesture, of some flaunting of ability. And nobody ever has seen the touch of the braggart, or even of the coxcomb, in Woolley. The condition whereby grace has its being is a perfect unawareness of the fact that it is graceful. In grace there is always a sense of modesty; the arrogance that masterfulness breeds does not go with grace, which is one of the gentler virtues.

This is not to hint that in Woolley's batsmanship there lurks a timid spirit. We all know that Woolley is one of the world's greatest match-winning batsmen. One wishes to establish nothing more than that a batsman so winsome as

Woolley is not properly to be called 'brilliant.' The word's very mention fills the mind with lurid colour. In Woolley's batsmanship there is radiance, but never a light that is garish. Even when he drives in front of the wicket the softest splendour falls over the field. None of us of these times has seen a left-handed cricketer play a handsomer game than Woolley's. To describe his forward hits one is tempted to borrow Nyren's words about Silver Billy Beldham: 'One of the most beautiful sights that can be imagined, and which would have delighted an artist, was to see him make himself up to hit a ball.' Yet the phrase will not quite fit Woolley. 'Make himself up' is too strong a term; it denotes a sudden accumulation of energy to be seen by the eye—an act of violence. Woolley has not been known to look violent or to seem stung suddenly into effort. He does not, like, say, a K. L. Hutchings or a Hirst, use a bat as a rod of punishment and flog boundaries by force out of bowlers. Rather a bat is a wand in Woolley's hand; he makes enchanting passes with it.

Woolley causes batting to appear the easiest pastime in the world. A fast bowler, pounding heavily to the crease, bowling at Woolley with the loud grunts of unloosened energy, working himself to death in the hot sun in quest of Woolley's wicket—and Woolley, all restful curves, making his easy opposition! What a contrast, and what a nice irony in it! Woolley hardly ever seems to hit a ball; of him you can really say that his strokes are *strokes*. Surely he just caresses the ball with a bat of velvet surface. One day an assertion of some primitive nature left somewhere in Woolley will impel him to smite once with all his might, and then the ball will pass far beyond the fields of Kent. For the force even of his caresses is strong enough; the secret of his motive power is timing. He gives us the lyrical in batsmanship, just as Trumper gave us the dramatic. When Trumper

batted, he met the onslaught of the bowler with an onslaught of his own as vehement. There was a conflict of will and skill when Trumper and a fast bowler were face to face, and so we had the dramatic, which thrives on conflict. As we have seen, Woolley does not look to be in stern opposition against a furious attack; he meets it effortlessly. And because drama cannot be felt unless we are made to understand that conflict hot and bitter is present, we get no drama from Woolley. He just goes his own sweet ways. While other batsmen turn the wicket into a battle-ground, the bowlers into an enemy to be plundered for runs, Woolley makes a soothing music that lures everybody after him, bowlers and all, as he moves along his happy track. He does not bat for his runs; he bats a serene course to them. So easeful and natural does a long innings strike you, when Woolley passes through one, that you well might think of some act blessedly predestinate. And it is likewise when Woolley fails; you are not outraged, you are not made to think that here ambition and skill have been frustrated. In Woolley's failures there is no jar that hurts you—they are as becoming as his conquests. Grace, one has already said, is modest, and has the air of fragility always. Rude human nature, such as Hirst showed us in his pulls to the on-boundary, never peeps out of Woolley. His batsmanship has been through a purifying fire; refinement one day came to Woolley

'And whipped the offending Adam out of him. . . .'

The point for technical men about Woolley's batting is important; he achieves his style mainly by back play—and have we not been told time after time by the dons of the game that if a batsman would own a beautiful style he must cultivate the forward method? In Woolley you find working to perfection the modern principle: 'Play back if you cannot drive.' How many times in a long innings does

Woolley exploit the forward lunge, made from a rigid back foot? The writer does not recollect having seen Woolley use this stroke. Woolley has a great height and consequently a wide swing for all his hits—so wide that in the curve of one full swing are included the three points at which a half-volley, a good-length ball, and a rather short one may be struck. Woolley, then, does not need to move his feet extensively; he has only to 'time' accurately his swing down as the three different lengths come to him—which three lengths, of course, are the common lengths of bowling. Granted the slightest readjustment of the feet, Woolley's swing will serve in itself for a strong hit from any of these lengths. His height, then, makes grace hard to miss by one so naturally willowy (let us overlook the faint suggestion of gawkiness in him); the small batsman—a Bobby Abel—is compelled to nip backwards and forwards on his feet, as the varying lengths come along, and though his animation is often thrilling, it must of necessity let the graceful go hang. Woolley has all the strokes; his leg glances, with his tall body half turning and drooping ever so slightly over to the on-side, are not magical like Ranji's were, but they are, in a quieter way, as precious. But discussion of Woolley in terms of technique is abominable. Who would talk of the *Mona Lisa* in the painter's jargon? And speaking of the *Mona Lisa*, is there not always about Woolley's dark face an inscrutable hint of a smile held back, like that we get from the lady sitting among the rocks?

Woolley's bowling was fashioned by the Tonbridge nursery, and Blythe served as the model. But the way of Nature after she has turned out a masterpiece is to break the mould. She does not let her best things get common: a solitary Blythe was enough for her; she made him once and for all. Woolley as a bowler is excellent on doubtful wickets, but he is plainly a bowler who is happier with a bat

in his hands. He first trod a county cricket field at Old Trafford in Whit Week, 1906. And some of us that were in the crowd thought we had seen the beginning and the end of this tall, pale boy's experience in big cricket. It was the match in which J. T. Tyldesley cut and drove the Kent bowling for 295 not out. On the first day Woolley missed two catches; his bowling analysis when 'J.T.T.' had finished with it was 1 wicket for 103; and in Kent's first innings Cuttell bowled him first ball. On the last day, though, he hit 64, and discerning men on the ground said the innings heralded a new glory coming into Kent cricket. Woolley is the most stylish professional batsman in the country; his style carries the Tonbridge stamp. Kent have rarely, in fact, had an uncultivated professional batsman. They consider in Kent that a boy needs to be taught to use his blade in the way that a boy with music in him is taught in other places to use a violin; batsmanship at Tonbridge, in short, is regarded as an art and a science and therefore a matter for culture.

AN OLD ENGLAND PLAYER

I MET him in a village far from the noise of cities, a village in which it was easy to think that time had stood still and the land was the quiet place it was in the years of his fame. Now, in his old age, he performed for livelihood some mechanical duty in a hosiery factory, and as I looked on him working at his bench one dark December afternoon and saw his white hair and the spectacles down his nose, I thought sadly of his days in the sun. He would not at first talk of cricket when I sat with him in his cottage after his work was over. He pretended to me that never in his life had he been so comfortable as he was now. He even affected to believe that with his life to live again he would not be a professional cricketer. 'It's no more'n a game,' he said, 'and in a lifetime at it you prodooce nowt!' These were the sophistries it was necessary for him to cultivate, that he might not too sharply feel the pathos which age and faltering flesh bring to the cricketer whose love of the game to the end burns a bright light.

And love the game he did in his heart. His eyes began to flash as slowly I led him on to a talk over the old times. And at last, the spell of memory began to work; he was back again in the 'eighties and 'nineties, England's great bowler, in the company of Tom Richardson, Lockwood, Peel, and Lohmann, with summer passing before him like a pageant. He spoke of Lord's, and recollected June mornings in London when he walked to the ground down the St. John's Wood Road, with polished magnificence of hansom cabs all about him. A day in the sun was before him, green grass for his young confident movements. In his period, Lord's was a different Lord's from the one we know. 'I went there a summer or two ago,' he said, 'and I didn't know it. It was

crowded and full o' noise. In my day folk didn't flock to cricket matches, and many's the time as I've played at Lord's (he pronounced it Loard's) and it's been nigh empty and that calm that you could hear the echo of a bat coming over the field. Hey! and the pavilion was a grand place; you were feared to breathe as you walked past all the fine gentry when you went out to bat.' It is easy to imagine the scene he had in mind. Look into the Badminton cricket book and ponder the picture of the immaculates of the pavilion at Lord's in 1880. Shining tall hats imposing on you everywhere. True, one nobleman has his tall hat on his knees while he takes the air, but his tall hat being on his knees you can see and admire the better the classic cast of his forehead. Bone of the finest bone, flesh of the most exclusive flesh, is every scion of them. 'There was some rare gentlemen and no mistake at Lord's in them times,' said my old cricketer. 'It did your eyes good to look at 'em, all shining like and mighty.' I understood he did not consider the stock in the pavilion at Lord's nowadays to be so pure, and I am certain he thought the less of Lord's—just a little the less—on that account.

The wonder and glory of life are in the way my old cricketer first went to Lord's—a raw-boned lad now for the first time in his life out of his native village: one week an old widow's only son labouring obscurely on the soil, the next week bowling 'from the Nursery End,' while the fashionable intelligence in the pavilion pronounced his name. 'T' old woman,' he told me, meaning his mother, 'was funny when I told her as I were going to play for t' county. "I reckon nowt to that," she said: "t' village team's good enough for thee." But I knowed she were glad in her heart, only she were feared as I'd get hurt playing for t' county. She allus were worryin' about that, and when I didn't get into t' England team in '93 when I was at t' top of my form she were reight

sorry proper, but she made to believe she were glad. Somebody had been reading t' paper to her about Ernest Jones.' In his great days he went on living in his quiet village with his mother, till she died. Can you see him, coming home some summer evening to their little cottage, after a day in a Test match amongst great men and in a great place, coming home and sitting quietly with her at summer in the lamplight, while at that very moment his name was notable in conversation all over the land? The county discovered his ability when he was playing on the waste land outside his village. One evening 'a gentleman in a top-hat' spoke to him and asked for his name and address. A day or two later he was at the nets at the county ground, and in a week he was moving south with the county team, bound for Lord's to play against an M.C.C. eleven captained by Grace.

On the opening morning of the match he went to Lord's while his clubmates were sitting in the smoke-room of the hotel after breakfast. He hadn't the patience to wait for them: he *must* be 'out and doing.' 'I walked up to t' big gates,' he told me, 'with my flannins [meaning flannels] in brown paper under my arm, but t' gatekeeper wouldn't let me in and I couldn't make out to him who I was. Then a big gentleman come up, and he had a great black beard. I knew it was t' Old Man, and he got me into t' ground. He'd heard about me, he said, when I spoke to him. "Aye," says he, "Mr. Johnson told me about you. So you're goin' to bowl us all out, eh? Well, I'm no good against a colt first time he bowls at me." ' And two hours later this rosy-faced lad was bowling at Grace. 'Mr. Johnson put me on after t' first hour, an' t' Old Man and Mr. Ferris had put up a score for t' first wicket. I can see him now—his big body making t' wickets look so little that you felt t' ball weren't big enough to hit 'em. And when he kept putting his left leg down t' pitch and smothering t' ball—hey, I felt as helpless as a babby!'

'W. G.'s' defence looked so impenetrable on the days he was in form that my old cricketer said Attewell used to say to the umpires, 'Eh, but you ought to get t' gauge out and measure 'is bat. He meks 'em 'isself.'

But not all the grand incidents of his career did my old cricketer recollect clearly. Sadly, I found his memory had failed to hold many a great moment's splendour. It was as though days and days had passed through him like water through a sieve. 'Often I looks at *Wisden's*,' he said, 'and sees t' scores in matches as I played in, but I can hardly believe I was the same man when I finds my name there.' But there were things he would never, never forget. 'Ranji!' he said, 'I s'll remember him till my dyin' day!' He witnessed again, as he sat there looking into the fire, the dark grace of the man, the lithe body, the silk shirt fluttering in the breeze, his bat seemingly more supple than other cricketers' bats, making movements in curves so swift that you might easily have imagined it was flexible, like a cane. On a fast wicket his first stroke told you that he was there for the afternoon. He flicked you anywhere he chose in the casual way a man flicks off a daisy's head with his stick. 'When he come in to bat we all used to try and get 'is wicket first, for the pride o' the thing, and bowl us selves for all as we were worth. Then we sort of knew it would be no good. It come over you all of a sudden like, and I used to feel summat give inside me.'

It was not Ranji, though, who was the bitter torment of the souls of bowlers in the old cricketer's time, but one name of Shrewsbury. He was past his best when this old man played the game, 'and,' said he, 'when they told us that we used to thank the Lord for it.' There was always a chance for the bowler who was tackling Ranji: even as he conjured your best length ball from the middle stump to the fine-leg boundary you could hope on, grasping at the

idea of human fallibility, telling yourself he would do it once too often. Besides, Ranji in one of his long innings would in time persuade even the bowlers into the magic circle of his art, and once there, they were spell-bound by his charm even as the crowd. It was different bowling at Shrewsbury; nothing here but naked antagonism, nothing for the poor bowler to think on but the toil of getting him out. On the hardest and most perfect turf he never strayed from the eternal verities of his art, and whether his score was none or 200 his play went on with the same cool scrupulousness, the same self-control. 'His bat were all middle,' said the old cricketer, 'and even on a sticky wicket you couldn't make him look awkward.'

Gunn and Shrewsbury at the wicket on a hot day, and how pitilessly bowlers were scourged! Lockwood and Richardson in action against their defences, hurling down the fastest that was in them as though by some great convulsion of nature, and in vain! When Notts won the toss in those days on a firm ground bowlers gave themselves over unashamedly to affliction; and if it was a match at Brighton the rest of the Notts men went down to the sea to bathe. To watch Gunn and Shrewsbury in partnership was to have a classical education in batsmanship. This period, my old cricketer's period, saw the classic style touch perfection. The rough grounds of the 'seventies and 'eighties had flawed the work of many a master perhaps not less gifted than Shrewsbury; but now the smooth wickets admitted the precision which is three parts of the classic manner. And not only was the batsmanship of the day pure in style; bowling, too, had the same clarity of outline. Length, length, length! Poise and balance! The ball pitching on the mythical sixpenny-piece, the bowler making a beautiful movement. Even the fast bowlers had the classic rhythm, and none so beautiful as Richardson to look upon. It was

the day of first principles, and in the cricket field Shrewsbury and Gunn and Attewell and my old cricketer announced the validity of them even as the Spencerian philosophers were announcing them to the workaday world outside. The age of rationalism, of men who disliked the oblique! Soon there were to come to cricket the first touches of decadence, the 'rococo allurements,' of Ranjitsinhji, his music drawing to ruin all the innocents of the field. But my old cricketer and the men he played with, though they heard the first call of the magic pipe, little dreamed of its significance. To the end of their cricketing days the straight bat and the honest length ball were enough for them. This old man showed me a worn cricket ball. 'I clean bowled the Old Man, W. W. Read, and A. E. Stoddart in a couple of overs with that ball, on a plumb Oval wicket, and every ball of 'em as straight as a whistle!' I took the ball in my hand and wondered if the fragrance of many a golden day was not in it somewhere.

And now I had to leave the old fellow. 'Sorry to have to say good night to ye,' he said, 'but I mun see about putting on t' alarm clock for t' morning.' As I left his cottage he was tinkering with the clock and setting it for 6.30. On my way home it so happened that the train passed the county cricket ground that had been the old man's heaven on earth. I peered through the carriage window-panes, but the field was hidden in the December night, and it seemed that summer and cricket could never come there again.

HOBBS: AN APPRECIATION

(May, 1920)

THAT the first century of the season should usually come from Hobbs is, as Mr. Square in *Tom Jones* would have said, in accordance with the eternal fitness of things. For Hobbs is indisputably our leading batsman; moreover, he is an out-and-out product of the modern game. Were a Martian to come upon us, wanting an introduction to the science of batting as we know it to-day, he need go no farther than the Oval some morning when Hobbs is at his best. And, truth to tell, Hobbs is always at his best, even if he fails to put up a big score. This is no paradox. There are cricketers who can give a glimpse of their mettle even in the very process of getting clean bowled, just as a tyro may hit a ball to the boundary time after time, yet only to convince us of his total lack of art. Whoever saw Maclaren act in any way unbecoming to a great cricketer? I always think of him to-day as I saw him once playing forward to Blythe beautifully, a majestic rhythm governing the slightest movement. He was clean bowled on the occasion I have in mind, for none, but nobody other than a giant of the game could have made a duck so immaculately. He played cricket as some proud Roman might have played it.

Hobbs, without possessing Maclaren's magnificence, can similarly convince us even on his unfruitful days. Rarely does he lose his wicket through incorrect or, rather, inartistic play. He does, of course, deviate from the conventions; that is because, like the artist he is, Hobbs cannot go on from day to day just scoring runs in the way that comes easiest to him.* No artist is happy moving along the lines where resistance is least, and Hobbs is for ever seeking to

* This was written of the Hobbs of 1919.

widen the scope of his craft—experimenting, creating obstacles for the sheer joy of overcoming them. So does a Chopin choose to write a study for black notes only, a Chardin paint a white tablecloth against a white background! Any green boy fresh from his coach at a public school may hit a ball on the off stump past cover; Hobbs often prefers to get it round to the on with a daring hook shot. Of course it is risky, and now and again he pays the penalty.

At the beginning of a certain bygone summer an amount of gloom set in at the Oval because Hobbs failed several innings in succession. Was his day over? asked the Jeremiahs. And then, just before the Lancashire match in London, Hobbs decided he had been playing a little too confidently, trying his on shots before getting the pace of the wicket. In this match he promised himself he would take no undue risks. As a result he got a century. And he would get a century every time he batted if he chose to 'sit on the splice' and wait for the inevitable loose ones. Fortunately for the glory of modern cricket, Hobbs sees in the game more of art than of science. Like Peter Pan, he is ever out for 'an awfully big adventure.'

I have said that Hobbs in himself would provide an ample idea of the scope of modern batting technique. And I should say that the great batsman of to-day differs from the great batsman of yesterday in his fuller command over back play as an offensive factor, and in his ability to combine it easefully with forward play. Men like Hobbs have worked out a method of back play such as few cricketers of the 'eighties dreamt of, though there have, of course, always been geniuses who 'builded wiser than they knew'—wiser, that is, than the law taught them. Such a one was Arthur Shrewsbury, whose back play was faultless, no matter how bad the wicket. But how far cricketers of yesterday were,

in the lump, from realizing the full scope of back play we may understand from this sentence in Grace's book on cricket:

'Whatever you do, do not get in front of the wicket when you play the ball. . . . My experience has shown me that by keeping your right foot firmly in its place and drawing back the left until the heels are almost touching, one can resort to what is called the glide stroke and place the ball to leg.'

The G. O. M. was, of course, laying down a canon taught by experience of the bowling of his day.* But other times other manners. Bowling is not as accurate now as it was in the Shaw and Attewell epoch, but it turns more than it did in those times and is distinctly shorter. Two conclusions emerge if we consider these changes. The 'classical' forward stroke was, from its very muscular action, slightly speculative; that is to say, one did not actually see the ball at the moment the bat met it. The stroke assumed that the ball on pitching would follow more or less along the line of flight. In that case the stationary right leg as a *point d'appui* for the lunge forward was a sound enough rule. If the ball turned out rather shorter than you had at first calculated, you could, as the G. O. M. instructs, play back at it simply by drawing in the left leg.

But latterly we have had scores of good bowlers (I am speaking of bowling on the average during the last dozen years) whose deliveries you could not trust to follow along the line after pitching. Some of them—Vogler, Faulkner, Bosanquet, Hordern—did not even break the way their finger and wrist action indicated; they were 'googly' men—bowlers of 'wrong 'uns.' To cope with these, the more or less speculative lunge forward was suicidal. Better to run

* Grace himself did not always obey his own rulings; see the portraits in Mr. Beldam's book on *Great Batsmen.*

out, if it was a case of forward play at all. Most of these men, however, bowled rather short of a length, so that if your right foot was grounded stiff just behind the popping crease, you met the ball as it was turning and, what was more dangerous still, taking an upward trajectory. In 1912 the South Africans went to pieces in the Triangular Tests mainly because of immobile play on the right foot. This defect, as Mr. E. H. D. Sewell once shrewdly pointed out, was probably due to the fact that in South Africa cricket is played on matting, and that a batsman tends to ground his right foot behind the edge of the matting and keep it there. Whatever the cause, fast-footedness was the South Africans' ruin against Barnes.

Batsmen like Hobbs (but to-day there are few!) meet the 'new' bowling mainly by using the feet as batsmen never used them before. They go back right on the wicket, when they cannot jump to the pitch, thus giving the ball time to work off its spin and devil and so become more playable. They simply have to move the right leg across the wicket (to the horror of the old 'uns!) so that it may be used as a pivot on which to swing the body for the hook stroke to a break-back—the pads quite legitimately protecting the stumps. Hobbs has this stroke to perfection.

Old cricketers may argue with some force that modern batting—even that of Hobbs—is not as delightful to watch as batting was when it was three-parts forward play. The grace of forward play comes from the longer swing that can be got if you move your left leg fairly well out. But a flowing rhythmical movement is not the only way in which great batting may titillate the æsthetic emotions. If Hobbs, for instance, finds the wicket or the bowling rather against a free forward game, then he makes the main factor in his back play take the form of wrist-work. And who will deny the fascination of wrist-work? Why, the most stylish bat of

the last twenty years, and that is R. H. Spooner, appealed to us less by his forward play than by wrist action used in conjunction with back play.

With Hobbs, when he is on a bad turf, back play is made positively dramatic. He times his strokes so beautifully that you catch your breath as you see the ball on the very wicket. Then he gives you that wonderfully quick swing round, the right leg as pivot, and you have the finest on-side shot of recent years! The drive through the covers is sweet, but Hobbs on the on-side is majestic. Besides, given a fast wicket, Hobbs can play the conventional forward game with the best of them. How superbly adaptable is his style we can understand from his success in this country, in South Africa, in Australia, against all conceivable sorts of bowling. The modern batsmen may have the good fortune to play on better wickets than those which fell to cricketers of yesterday, but, to be just to them, let us realize that they have bowling infinitely more diversified to tackle.*

Hobbs has mastered great bowlers in the 'classical' manner, and Rhodes, Blythe; Noble, J. T. Hearne will compare with any of the bowlers of the 'eighties and 'nineties; he has also mastered the greatest of the modernists—Hordern, Schwarz, Faulkner, Barnes, Hirst, F. R. Foster, 'googly' men, leg-break-cum-off-break, swerve or what you will. He learnt all the well-tried tricks of the trade from Tom Hayward, and he has added a few of his very own.

* Again, let me make it plain that I refer to bowling during the Barnes–Vogler–Foster period.

JOHNNY BRIGGS

He was surely born for a game, for he was a sort of little india-rubber ball of a man, and he seemingly remained in one position more than a second at a time only by strong will-power. When he walked from the pavilion at Old Trafford (under his arm that mummy of a bat of his, in the ancient binding) one had the notion that if he came down too heavily on the turf he would bounce back again into the dressing-room, through the window. Recollect how he went to the wicket. He was, one thought, like a happy boy going for a walk, or rather in quest of adventure. His eyes shone humour at you, his every movement was alive, and youthfully alive. One has known dull days and dull cricket before the advent of Briggs, but he had just to show his face and a light passed over the field, and with it a companionable warmth. He was a man into whose body the humours of summer entered day by day—sunshine, wind, and refreshing dews. No cricketer ever lived who was so much the child of nature as Briggs. This man a subtle bowler? you might well have asked, looking at his bland eyes, yet he was a very Heathen Chinee of cricket. He bowled you a left-handed ball with a quite casual motion; his arm swept over almost ingratiatingly. His run to the wicket was modest, and a little mincing. But if the turf were at all susceptible to spin, the ball he sent you had a bottle imp inside it. It might twist so viciously that a little tuft of grass was cut from the pitch; it might scuttle to the base of your stumps like a mouse; it might jump up at you and rap your knuckles abominably. Yet it was hard to be bad-tempered with him, despite his deceit. He was as a child playing tricks with you. When he bowled you neck and crop there was a cocky little strut in his walk as he moved to mid-off to tell him exactly

how the ball had pitched on your legs and hit your off wicket. And again it was hard to be short with him. Obviously he had bowled you in sheer fun; you simply had to join in the general laughter. He was as busy as a bee all day long. How he worried his batsman! The poor fellow, having lost his breath stopping a fizzing break-back from Johnny, could not (as he could when he was playing other bowlers) take a little walk round the crease and get his lungs full again. No; Briggs bowled ball after ball quicker than any other bowler that ever made batsman's life intolerable. He had no long trek back to his bowling base: a short stride or two, a bounce, and here he was again. And you couldn't jump out to many of his slows, to get them on the half-volley. He seemed to give the ball no upward curve at all: down to the wicket from his arm it came, for all the distraught batsman knew. His fast ball, too, had to be 'looked out for.' He could bowl 'a yard faster' without the faintest change of action.

Still, you would not call him a bowler crafty in the Rhodes and Trumble sense. These men went about their work plainly using fundamental brainwork. You could see them, while they were fielding at mid-off, thinking over problems, considering technical ways and means for the next over. Briggs never gave a hint that he went into moments of abstraction, of private subterfuge. His was nature's cunning; he did the wily thing as Brer Fox does it. His craft worked by instinct, not by reason, and improvisation was the note of it. So, too, when he was making his runs. A characteristic innings by Briggs raced along like a scherzo. His bat flashed impudently. He looked to be always on his toes, 'daring' the bowler. Out of his crease would he skip, suggesting a short run, and back home would he scurry as some frantic fieldsman shook the earth with intimidatory thuds. He was, so to say, always 'pulling fat bacon' at the

field while he batted. Half of his runs he made by an audacious slash at the off-side ball. It was not a cut or a slice, but a combination of both. As the ball passed the wicket he seemed to hit it with a horizontal bat but with the bat's full face. The stroke made everybody laugh—save the man at point who had to get out of the way of it, and the bowler. Something of a miracle happened when Briggs contrived a long innings—as often enough, he did. He 'played with fire' all the time, and, as it is with anybody who plays with fire, Providence usually watched over him. His batsmanship was the triumph of a keen eye and quickly responding muscles. And so was it his sharp sight and agility of body that made him Vernon Royle's successor in the off-side field—not in Royle's classical manner, but in a spring-heeled way of his own.

The crowd loved him because he was a comedian. But was he at bottom *always* the laughing cricketer? Look at the photographs of the man. About the mouth there is a droop which does not obviously suggest unwearying spirits. There is in the eyes the look of a man not born to be funny from morning till night, day in and day out. The old tragedy of the comedian, indeed, was in Briggs, the tragedy of the Merry Andrews the world insists must live through their saddest days to the sound of men laughing at them. That droop of Briggs's lips which would come in moments which took him 'off his guard' was the grimace of Grimaldi himself. We all of us know now that Briggs must have found, many a day, that it was hard to be funny. He was really a man of uncommon sensibility. His nerves were easily jarred. When he tossed his audacious ball to George Ulyett in the famous Lancashire and Yorkshire match at Old Trafford, and when Ulyett hit it deep to the long field where Albert Ward waited and caught it, the crowd mingled with its tumult of acclamation some rich chuckles at

yet another 'little dodge of Johnny.' But in the pavilion, after the match, poor Briggs sat with a white face. Bowling his 'little dodge' had well-nigh burst his heart with apprehension. And the end of his life was as sad as Jack Point's. We will perhaps do proper homage to Briggs's memory if, after we have thought of him with a smile—and he would surely like us to smile—we also think for a moment sadly of him.

EVOLUTIONS

THE man who would fix the beginning of modern cricket is likely to make the mistake of J. R. Green, who looked for the beginning of modern English history and found it three times. Did the modern game set in with the first ball sent down overhand? A case (for the purposes of an armchair argument) might be made for the notion. The advent of bowling delivered with the arm above the shoulder must, to say the least, have caused a revolution in the game the like of which can rarely have been known to cricketers before or after Willsher, of Kent, the most notable pioneer of overarm bowling. It was June, 1864, before the M.C.C. legalized overhead bowling—'cartwheel' stuff as the purists of the day called it. In the Hambledon era lobs were the fashion—though not the twisting things we of to-day call lobs, with Jephson, Simpson-Hayward, and Walter Humphreys in mind. John Nyren, the high poet of Hambledon, said of a bowler that he must cultivate 'a proper length,' but advised young cricketers not to attempt 'twist.' Underarm bowling in those days was often fast. How did the Hambledon men achieve their pace with an action which modern bowlers would find inadequate in swing and body energy? Would the Hambledon fast bowling seem fast to us, who have watched Richardson, Brearley, Kortright, and Ernest Jones? There is positive evidence that the old lob bowlers were fast. Osbaldeston was the terror not only of batsmen but of long-stops, and Brown, of Brighton, needed three long-stops, and once he beat the lot of them with a ball that killed a dog on the boundary. The famous lob bowlers of that age (we see through the enchanting mists of distance!) were Lumpy, Frame, David Harris, 'tall and upright as a Grenadier,' and (one must not forget this one) Mr. Luffey,

who bowled in the match which Mr. Pickwick witnessed. Mr. Luffey, we are informed by Dickens, retired a few paces behind the wicket and applied the ball to his right eye for several minutes, and then cried 'Play' in a fierce voice. But one must hasten to add that Dickens's impression of a cricket match of the 'thirties must not be taken as quite authentic. For Dickens the glory of life was energy, and where he could not find it in his fact his imagination provided it. Thus even a tranquil game in an old England meadow he must transform into a whirling, agitated mob—batsmen stunning themselves in collision, bowlers beside themselves with excitement, and the fieldsmen bruised and bleeding through catching the ball on their skulls. Cricket in the 'thirties was an elegant game; does not Nyren himself call it the 'manly and elegant game of cricket'? That men could play it and wear top-hats at the same time speaks eloquently enough of the poise and dignity of the old cricketers.

The 'bridge' between the Hambledon and modern bowling was the 'round-arm' manner, invented in 1787 by Tom Walker, but not sanctioned by law till some forty years afterwards. We must give Walker his due, even at the expense of the pretty tale which would have us believe a certain Mr. Wilies hit upon the 'round-arm' way through watching his sister bowl. The 'new bowling' became the rage in 1827, when a Sussex team, with Lillywhite in it, made use of 'round-arms' and thrashed England twice out of three matches. And for thirty years round-arm bowling was the recognized technique in first-class company. The rough wickets no doubt gave it a sting it would not have on modern grounds; still, Wootton, Tarrant, Wisden, Caffyn, and Alfred Mynn brought to the style genius of their own. There was little or no slow round-arm bowling; it was fast or fast medium. Not to be too sentimental about old-time cricket, let one say there is reason to believe bowling in the

round-arm period often fell far below an artistic level. Even Frederick Gale had to admit that much of the round-arm bowling was 'rubbish.' The very action of the round-arm is against a varied attack, and so long as it was the fashion there could be no great chance of spin or flight variation. The off-break, for instance, cannot be easily bowled with the arm no higher than the shoulder.

The game turned top over heels, so to say, with the coming of overarms. The ball now went to the batsman from a height that permitted subtler flight variations than the round-arm men could even attempt; also, the overarm action had its natural spin and pace from the pitch to set the batsmen a-dancing. Batsmanship, indeed, had to begin all over again, footwork developed, and new defensive as well as offensive strokes invented. And as batsmen worked out a new technique, the field had to be set in a new way. Not all at once, of course, did overarm bowling ring the changes: for a while it was not much more subtle than the round-arm stuff itself. Wickets still were dangerous, and a bowler could get his victims without the wear and tear of grey matter. Then the arts of the groundsmen came more and more to perfection. After all, maybe the most violent revolution in cricket history was caused by the application of heavy roller and mowing machine to wickets—as Mr. Lyttelton has suggested. As more and more level grounds were made, batsmen began to gain mastery even over the formidable overarms. Then the bowlers *had* to think. Moreover the greatest of all cricketers was beginning to fix the mark of his genius on the technique of batsmanship. W. G. Grace invented modern batting and, as much as the safer grounds, killed or half-killed the 'brute force' bowlers. On the improved wickets he flogged fast bowling to his heart's content. Moreover, there were keen disciples of the master's methods up and down the land. The battle of wits

between batsman and bowler—and the history of cricket is one long battle of wits between them—went on, and by 1877 many bowlers had gone to the opposite extreme of the Jackson and Willsher school, and were bowling slows.

Was not the time now ripe for the really great modern bowler? The problem was there for him to solve—Grace on a tolerably good pitch. And the materials of the modern bowler were there (save the googly!), though they were distributed amongst many men, none of them quite master of *all* the tricks. Whoever should come at this 'psychological' moment and sum up in his own art all the scattered elements, he would surely be hailed the first of the great bowlers of modern cricket history.

He did come—most promptly to his cue, his name Spofforth. Before his heyday there were fast bowlers, slow bowlers, and medium-paced bowlers, but hardly a solitary cricketer who combined in his own bowling all the paces and all the breaks. Spofforth's fame is abused if we think of him merely as a fast bowler. At his greatest he was a master of variations, with a slow ball as deadly as his fastest. If one believes only half the tales that are told by the old men of Spofforth's prowess, one is forced to think that no bowler since Spofforth has had quite his genius. Few of the resources of the bowler of to-day were unknown to Spofforth—save the googly, whose contribution to the art hardly looks permanent just now. It would seem he exhausted all the potentialities of overarm bowling which are really worth while, and the problem of bowlers of to-day is to improve on his craft.

It cannot be said that Grace so completely as this touched in batsmanship the perfection that gives the sense of finality. It is true he invented modern batting; true, too, that, as Ranjitsinhji said, he changed batting from an accomplishment into a science. But did he quite make it the fine art

that it was in Trumper's hands, in Ranji's hands? He was the greatest run-making machine ever known, but did he, through batsmanship, convey so much of beauty as Spooner? One reads that Grace, almost to the end, obeyed the old law which discountenanced the mobile right foot. Well, think of the thrilling agility of Trumper, and ask how could Grace have so stirred the imagination, the æsthetic sense, as Trumper did? And poor indeed would have been the service done to the Great Old Man's genius had not the batsmen who followed him seen that the lessons taught by him were not barren, but fruitful. 'He turned the old one-stringed instrument into a many-chorded lyre,' wrote Ranjitsinhji of Grace. And Ranji, Trumper, and Spooner made music out of it surely more beautiful than any the old cricketers knew. Is it blasphemous to say so much? Tales of Silver Billy Beldham, of Pilch, of Carpenter, of Daft, of Shrewsbury and Gunn, of Lucas—down the ages come tales of how much of beauty these artists put into cricket. Well, the poor modern cricketer must say something in defence against the cry 'The game is not what it used to be!' He will admit that, as a contest, cricket to-day probably cannot compare with the game as it was when a great batsman had to face a great bowler. He will admit that bowling has not advanced in lasting points since Spofforth. He will even admit that since the war, cricket in the lump has fallen away abominably. But he cannot (at least the writer cannot) believe that batsmanship ever had style more varied than in the 1902–12 period, or beauty with so much temperament in it. It may even be said that the great batsmen of the 1902–12 period fell so completely in love with the notion of batsmanship as an art through which personality might be expressed that they forgot cricket was a game. It may even be said these modern masters were selfish, but, if so, their selfishness was the defect of the artistic temperament. Give

modern batsmanship its due. The art of Hayward was not less immaculate, not less classic in its calm poise, than Daft's; yet he might have been seen and admired on the same day that saw Jessop riding the whirlwind. Spooner gave us glimpses into loveliness too frail to last—he was the Herrick of batsmen. And yet he expressed himself through the same means that served Maclaren, whose batsmanship might well have been that of a Roman Emperor of the decadence. And Ranji there was, letting in on our English game a light from the East; yet Hirst, too, using the same game to express his comfortable rusticity—a Hambledonian, here, if ever there lived one. Give modern cricket its due indeed. The old men who speak eternally of its deterioration do scant homage to the cricketers of the past. Theirs was the sowing.

WILLIAM GUNN

In any form of activity, greatness is more than skill or immense accomplishment; its touchstone is not to be found even in a highly individual style. The quality of greatness, surely, is most evident when an artist or craftsman so sums up in his work the typical characteristics of his occupation that we readily speak of him as the apogee of his art or craft. Genius of the first order gives us a consummation of its particular study; it leaves, or seems to leave, no potentialities wasting through lack of cultivation. That is why great men may be said to end, rather than to begin, epochs. William Gunn's work had this crowning glory. Nobody has succeeded him though his forerunners were many. He was the last of the 'classical' batsmen.

The marks of that so-called 'classical' period of batsmanship were forward play and a gracefulness that can without any misuse of language be called lyrical. Such a batsmanship is no longer with us, for the reason that modern bowling does not encourage it. To-day batsmanship is audacious, it is brilliant, it is challenging, it is versatile. You may call it all these things, but, taken in the lump, you cannot call it graceful. If Hobbs drives a short ball pitching on the off-side, as often enough he prefers to do, past mid-on, instead of forcing it past cover, the stroke moves you to surprise before it moves you to admiration. The sensations are not those which were awakened by Gunn's batting, nor by the typical batsmen of his day. It was a different crowd psychologically that watched cricket in Gunn's days—a more tranquil crowd, that lived in a world of less pace and changefulness than ours. One stresses the distinction the better to understand Gunn's manner, and the great hold he had on the cricket-lovers of his age. You will find on every

pavilion in the country to-day men who speak of Gunn's batting as musicians speak of Mozart. His was the batting of felicity. It was content with sheer grace. You could watch it quite oblivious of the utilitarian consideration of whether runs were coming, and coming with match-winning speed. Often, in fact, Gunn gave the impression that he had fallen so completely in love with doing a beautiful thing for its own sake that the matter of his team's interests was for the moment escaping him. Gunn was just as fascinating to watch in the nets as 'in the middle.' Even when the match was 'fizzling out' into a draw the crowd would stay on to look at him.

Gunn summed up the batsmanship of the 'eighties and 'nineties so completely that if nothing were left to us of the game's history during that period save the recollection of his art, we could reconstruct it comprehensively enough from an examination of that art. His easeful forward style, at any rate, would tell us a good deal of the sort of bowling he had to meet. Graceful batsmanship depends on graceful bowling. Let a batsman be in doubts as to the length or direction of a delivery, and the precision of his cricket must suffer—and precision is three parts of good style. And it is only too true that the characteristic of modern bowling—especially since the googly came in—is unsteadiness of pitch, length, and spin. Forward play, as the 'classical' batsmen employed it, would be too great a speculation against bowling not immaculate in length and not fairly direct in spin. The batsman must have the ball on the ground with the secret of its break revealed before he can lunge at it, after the Gunn manner, with safety. 'Classical' forward play was positively encouraged by bowlers of the Attewell and Shaw school. They used all their great arts towards the end of tempting you to lunge forward too far. In fact, the difference between modern bowling and the bowling of

Gunn's period is that to-day bowlers seek to force you back to the wicket, while yesterday they sought to drag you out over the crease. And, of course, a man playing forward is prettier to watch than a man playing back.

Gunn, then, played cricket at a time when bowling favoured the style of batsmanship which we have all agreed to call 'classical.' He came just as Grace's superb lessons in the orthodox were in full circulation. Moreover nature endowed him with great height and looseness of limb, and with these physical attributes he could exploit Grace's first principles unhindered by any of the impediments of bone and flesh which so often got in the master's way. There was also in Gunn's favour the fact that for the bulk of his batting he had the perfect wickets of Trent Bridge. In short, it would seem that there was a very conspiracy of circumstances towards the end of fashioning Gunn into the exemplar of the batsmanship of his time.

Old cricketers will tell you how proudly Gunn carried himself—tall and as upright as any man of Hambledon. His height was 6 feet 3 inches, and he was built in proportion. He had all the strokes which Grace taught—all of them scrupulously scientific. But his presence and method put a bloom on the orthodox. The fastest bowling, even on a bumpy pitch, left him unruffled. The mechanism of his strokes was so precise that his strongest drive sent the ball along the grass. If he did hit to the on-side there was no suspicion of a 'pull' in the stroke. The one doubtful hit in his repertory was a risky slash made at the pitch of a good length ball on the off. The ball went over cover-point's head, and gave the field some hope. Ranjitsinhji thought Gunn used this hit simply to keep the fieldsman's spirit from dying out altogether. Grace described Gunn in 1899, as 'beyond all doubt one of the greatest professional bats-

men England has seen.' This is high praise, especially if we remember that Gunn had to stand a day-to-day comparison with Arthur Shrewsbury, his colleague in many a famous partnership.

ALEC WATSON

(1880 and 1920—a Contrast)

WATSON's best period happened some thirty years ago, and since then the conditions under which cricket is played have changed so much as to make rather futile the question which will inevitably spring up to-day—'Would Watson have been a successful bowler now?'

That he bowled at batsmen like Grace, W. W. Read, Scotton, Shrewsbury, A. G. Steel, and Gunn, and against the straightest bats ever seen on the cricket field, could take his 100 wickets in a season at a cost of some twelve runs each, are facts which will, of course, command respect. But while we moderns are bound to honour the great bowlers of old, we are yet left free to argue that the job of getting men out must have been considerably easier on the fairly rough grounds of the 'eighties than it is in any summer in our age of marl and heavy rollers. Look into the old chronicles of the game, and you may read of the crowd at Lord's rising as a man to cheer 'W. G.' for stopping four 'shooters' in an over from a fast bowler. What would happen on a modern cricket field if a batsman ran into four shooters in an afternoon? Would he not be totally overcome by the phenomenon and consider it a matter demanding scientific inquiry? There is a myth about Watson to the effect that he could bowl a 'shooter' whenever he wanted. By what species of spin he managed the trick we are not told. Top-spin, applied to a medium paced ball, even if it is bowled with a low flight from the bowler's arm, simply causes the ball to 'nip' from the ground. There must, however, be an upward trajectory after an 'overarm' or a 'round-arm' ball has hit the ground—unless it is made to 'skid' by the condition of the wicket. We have many bowlers nowadays who

can put top spin on a ball, but it is in the power of no man to send down a 'shooter' at will, on a pitch which has a prepared cushion of grass.

But no admirer of Watson will want to make too much capital out of his 'shooter.' A crude ball at the best, it does not overcome the batsman so much by skill as by surprise. And the really fine point about Watson's bowling, as indeed it was the fine point about the bowling of all the 'old masters,' was that it challenged the batsman's mettle in the light of open day, with 'skill for skill' the battle cry. The old bowlers were not 'mystery bowlers.' They did not get their men out simply by 'taking them unawares.' We might put down the old bowler's faith in these words: 'I know your batting points; you know my bowling points. You've nothing up your sleeves, no more have I. Yet I'll beat you!'

When we take a glance at the modern slow-to-medium paced bowler's technique, and compare it with the technique of a cricketer like Watson, it is like looking from a music score by Stravinsky to one by Haydn. The one depends on its complications—one might even say its chromatic complications—a swerve, googly, and variation in pace and flight; the other is content with sturdy diatonics —a good mechanical length and an off-break as obvious as the nose on your face. Even allowing for the difference between the wickets of Watson's day and those of our own, we cannot hold back astonishment that the old bowlers should have gone so far on capital so slender. How striking an idea of their mastery may we get if we will look at the subject this way: Watson bowled a ball just under medium pace and now and then used the conventional off-break. This delivery is not exactly fashionable in county cricket now, save on sticky wickets, and Cook of Lancashire bowls it better than anybody else, though not quite as subtly as Haigh and J. T. Hearne bowled it a few years

ago. The deadliness of the off-break must have been greater to batsmen who did not cover the wickets with the pads in the wholesale way familiar to us.

Again, modern mastery over on-side play, with the pull and hook stroke brought to a Hendren's perfection, has also developed something like a specific for the off-break. The dangerous ball for the modern batsman is that which pitches on his leg stump and swings across to the off; he must play it, the pads are no use here. Barnes was a genius with this delivery, and when he exploited it even a Trumper, with *his* quick feet, was at a loss.

We can see, then, that the technique of batting has so changed since Watson's period that now the deadliest bowler is he whose best ball is in total contrast to Watson's best ball. Plainly, we cannot indulge in comparisons between the old bowling and the new; there is no means at hand whereby to equate our problem. All we can say is that Watson gave almost as much trouble to the great batsmen of the 'eighties as Barnes has done in our own time.

M. A. NOBLE

THE general law which divides human mentality into two contrasted types—making of us Liberals and Conservatives in politics, classicists and romancists in the arts and literature, Platonists and Aristoteleans in philosophy—would seem to operate even in our sports and pastimes. In cricket, at any rate, we have our Frys and our Ranjis, our Trumpers and our Nobles. M. A. Noble was in the classic school through and through, and that much can be said without contradicting the view that also he was definitely a player of to-day. For it is possible to be classic without being pedantic. Noble's style scrupulously observed all the principles which long experience has sanctioned, but with him these principles had, so to speak, developed naturally, and the ease with which he was able to adapt them, especially in his batting, to every change in the technique of the game, was a striking justification of their undiminishing utility.

As a bowler he was far enough advanced to cultivate the swerve, but even here he never forgot the time-honoured axiom about good length being the basis of good bowling. Too many of our 'swervers' can only bring off their effects by over-pitching, and indeed the very conditions which are required to induce the swerve, render it difficult not to over-pitch. Before a ball will curl, obviously it must be in the air for a longish time, and take an uncommonly spacious curve in its flight. The trouble, therefore, is to swerve without presenting the batsman with the full toss or half-volley which can so easily be hit to the boundary. Noble solved the problem like the thoughtful student he was. He got the necessary addition to his curve in the air at his end of the pitch—not at the batsman's. This he managed by going

down rather low on his right knee in the act of delivery, and by releasing the ball from the hand farther back in the swing over than is usual. The ball thus was impelled from a conveniently low altitude, and as a consequence, the upward trajectory was a little higher than the average bowler's, and so the ball gained the extra air in which to lose its spin—and this must happen before the swerve will take effect—all of which operations happened well away from the batsman's reach. His swerve was done so subtly that the batsman hardly saw it at all, for it was less a curve in from the right or the left than a vertical swerve. There was perhaps a slight swing from leg, but the chief danger came from the ball that dropped suddenly down just when it appeared certain to be a delightful half-volley. There was, however, nothing sensational in Noble's swerve; even a purist like Alfred Shaw might have cultivated it had he played the game to-day. As has been said, Noble always tried to keep his length classically correct. He also had the conventional off-break of the fast medium bowler. But, first and last, it was his generalship that gave the quality to his bowling which made it difficult on all wickets. He was a master of deceptive flight, as, indeed, most great Australian bowlers invariably are. They need to be, too, playing as they do in a country where the hard, fast grounds so often make break almost impossible.

Noble's batting was in all its details quite classical; here no notably modern characteristic entered at all. His play did not fire the imagination of the crowd, like Trumper's; rather, it compelled admiration. There was thoughtfulness in his very stance at the wicket, and every action pointed to a deliberate and studiously cultivated method.

The art of a Trumper is like the art in a bird's flight, an art that knows not how wonderful it is. With Noble there was always a sense of effort; we did not feel, as we did with

Trumper, that batting was for him a superb dissipation, a spontaneous spreading of fine feathers. He gave us the impression, always, that there was some difficult obstacle in the attack, to be overcome only by hard work and untiring determination. His was the skill that comes not exactly 'to the manner born,' but through diligently scorning delights and living laborious days. He played back to an extent uncommon among Australians. But it was back play of an extremely graceful and polished kind. He did not dab at the ball, bringing the bat from just behind the right leg with a cramped wrist action, as some batsmen do. His bat, even in his very late defensive strokes, came down from above with a full swing; it was as free and as rhythmic as in a forward shot. He combined caution with enterprise in a way that is typical of the average Australian cricketer. In his brilliant moments his off-drive was worth a day's walk to see.

P. F. Warner has described Noble as the wisest of all Australian captains, and though this is high praise, remembering Giffen and Darling, it must come very near the truth. On the field he was the picture of concentration. His temperament inclined him naturally towards the more scientific aspects of the game, and he usually wore the expression of a mathematician tussling with a stiff proposition. He played the game for all he was worth—as though, indeed, a kingdom depended on it. It will be best to remember him as a long-limbed and tense-featured giant standing abstractedly between the overs at point (where, by the way, he was one of the finest fielders of them all) knitting his brows and letting the whole world go by, save the particular scene of the moment—the warm sun and the grass, the silently moving men in white, and the dire necessity of another wicket before lunch.

THE CRICKETER AS AN ARTIST

We are supposed to be well on the way towards decadence in an art as soon as we allow the parts to fascinate us rather more than the whole—when, for instance, a Debussy so falls in love with the attractiveness of his whole-tone scale harmonies that he neglects the main job of music, which is the expression of some sort of emotion. But decadent or no, it is only human to find great joy in a new technical dodge for its own sake. A man may decide to buy a cycle, meaning really to save money in railway fares from and to the city; none the less, the day the machine arrives he will take the thing out and ride it to nowhere in particular, simply exulting in a new toy. Probably he will also take it to pieces and lose a few important screws and things—out of what is at the bottom the artist's preoccupation with the way of doing things simply for the fascination of that way. This love of technique for technique's sake is a characteristic in English cricket to-day—perhaps more than it has ever been before. The parts of cricket—bowling, batting, and fielding—are now reaching an almost over-developed stage. In the beginning, we can imagine, twenty-two men met on a field, took sides, and had no other interest in cricket than to win the match. No matter how 'old Lumpy' bowled 'Nutty' out—grub or full toss—the great point was that he *was* out. And the lucky snick past slip looked just as well on the score-sheet as the neatest of cuts. In its earliest period, the parts of cricket were too crudely organized to invite specialism and all those distractions which specialism can easily engender to take a cricketer's attention from the job in hand—that of beating the other men. Played on a village green, rudely if lovingly, one could say of cricket, borrowing from Kipling, that 'the game was more than the player of the

game.' Nothing but the lust for conquest and contest here —no wiredrawn appreciation of the fine shades; simply the wigs on the green and our team against the world.

There is a different viewpoint from this among cricketers now, and, indeed, among watchers of cricket. Who cares about the tussle for championship points if a Ranji be glancing to leg? Even the man who wants Surrey to get beaten cannot find it in his heart to complain if Hobbs scores a hundred. And what modern bowler that has felt the joy which comes of breaking a ball from the off with a leg-break action can resist the temptation of bowling his googly in season and out—aye, even if he suspects that a good straight length ball would get his man out quicker? A summer or two ago the writer was coaching little boys at a public school. They chafed at having to pass through a course of conventional bowling. 'We'd rather get wickets with breaks and swerves than the straight stuff that the old 'uns used to bowl'—that was their view of the matter at the bottom. And only the other day, a great batsman in one of our counties, when he was bowled trying to hook an off-ball, explained his failure in these words: 'Well, you simply can't go on hitting off-balls past mid-off. Any fool is able to do that. One gets tired of doing things in the easiest way.' The divine discontent of the artist, this, surely. Who that has a soul at all, be he bricklayer or maker of sonnets, is happy just moving along the lines of least resistance? Had Ranjitsinhji been content with fat scores made in the fashionable way, he could easily have gone on hitting balls from the middle stump straight to long-on. But he was ever an artist, 'tired of doing things in the easiest way,' ever seeking to widen the scope of his craft, experimenting, creating obstacles for the sheer fun of overcoming them.

Was ever cricket so well off in the so-called classical days for artists, especially artist-bowlers, as the game has been

these last few years, since the advent of B. J. T. Bosanquet and his disciples? Surely a man had to have an axe of partisanship to grind before he could rave for æsthetic reasons about the bowling of the Attewell school. A good length outside the off stump all day—why, one of those new-fangled bowling machines would have been as interesting to watch. It was all right, of course, if you were watching the game for no other reason than to shout Nottinghamshire home, for undoubtedly Attewell did get his bags of wickets. But the man who goes to cricket solely to witness a contest is mistaking his game. Football can work off more combative energy in ten minutes than cricket in a summer. The summer game has, of course, its tight finishes—moments in which it is the team and not the individual that matters, moments in which one will cheer a full toss that gets a wicket and groan at the bowler whose fine off-break gets clouted for six. But these seasons of crisis come rarely in cricket. Normally the game is a spectacle as much as a contest. And because of that we must have our artist-cricketers—men who can get us interested in themselves, who can get interested in themselves, even though no finish of the game is in sight, and all is moving to the drawn match which bores the uninitiated onlooker. With Attewell bowling like an automaton and Scotton always taking the line of least resistance, the game needed to be won and lost. There was little, surely, in these cricketers but match-winning qualities. And, significantly enough, with the coming in recent summers of the great individualists like Fry, Ranji, Trumper, Bosanquet, the ancient lament about incompleted games has been heard less and less.* Nobody worries about the draw—the uncompleted match which satisfies no lust for conquest, if an artist-batsman happens to be on view. Not long ago the most attractive side in the country

* Written in 1920.

was Sussex, with, of course, Ranji in the eleven. Yet they drew all, or nearly all, their matches.

Our grandfathers had, of course, their artist-batsmen in no small numbers, and perhaps it is in bowling that modern cricket is infinitely more interesting* than cricket of yesterday to the onlooker who does not happen to be a partisan, but watches simply out of a love of the fine shades. Certain, anyhow, that our grandfathers never knew the googly. When county groundsmen a few years ago started to make their pitches as perfect for batsmen as they knew how—mainly with an eye to a three days' gate—they probably broke the hearts of scores of average bowlers, who found that length and spin were not much use on those 'shirt-front wickets.' But the artist-bowler found only another occasion for joy in this new obstacle, and set himself to get over it. Then the googly came, the whole point of which is to deceive the batsman before the ball has pitched. What matter the state of the ground if you can beat your man in the air? And the perfect modern wicket saw also the development of the swerve—another device calculated to enable a bowler to snap his finger at the groundsman and his marl. Thus did bowling take on finer and finer points. Today people actually go to a match to watch Parkin bowl—it is not only the batsman that is in the picture now! Mind you, they go not merely to watch Parkin bowl somebody out. Folk doubtless went to look at Alfred Shaw get wickets. It was the wickets going down that they liked; not bowling for its own sake. A few summers ago scores of cricketers flocked to Lord's keen on Parkin's bowling and found it interesting whether or no he was getting wickets.

Specialism always makes the parts more and more interesting, and we have arrived at the time when cricket is in

* 'Interesting,' I say—from the spectators' point of view; I do not mean that bowling now is better technically.

the hands of specialists. There is even a danger that the whole will suffer. You can get so much in love with the art of spinning the ball 'the wrong way' that you begin to forget that without a good length a bowler is no match-winner. And as a long-hop is not even pretty to watch, you might even cease to be worth looking at. It is well, then, that in cricket, too, nature in the long run distributes equally her Platonists and her Aristoteleans—the men who walk by faith and the men who walk by reason. We have yet such sturdy upholders of first principles as William Quaife and J. W. Hearne. But even Hearne bowls googlies. There is no getting away from it—it is the heyday of the cricketer-artist, the man who simply will not do the job in the old-fashioned and easiest way.

SILHOUETTES

I

HENDREN

(July 3rd, 1923)

HENDREN has lived to find himself one of Middlesex's bowlers; he trusts to medium-paced, good-length stuff and keeps at it with a terrier-like tenacity. At the finish of his bowling periods to-day one would find him deep on the boundary, obviously a glutton for work, hoping every minute for a ball to chase on twinkling feet. Once, at the fall of a wicket, he sat himself down on a form on the front row of the shilling crowd and immediately began to talk to somebody as though making a lifelong friendship. He is one of the most likeable and human men in cricket; greatness has not removed him from the walks of average men. No wonder the crowd calls him 'Patsy'—how could they, looking at his humorous mouth, be expected to take to his real name, which is none other than Elias? The crowd has a genius for discovering its favourite's characteristic name. Once on a time Lilley appeared in cricket and won the affection of the multitude. But the multitude, when they discovered Lilley was named Augustus, mouthed 'Augustus' over once or twice, looked intimately again at the big, hearty man, and then decided 'Augustus' certainly would not do. So they called him 'Dick.'

II

A MOOD OF GEORGE GUNN

(July 7th, 1923)

On Saturday Trent Bridge at high noon found us in a place without air, with sun beating down on the grass vehemently. From the shade of the pavilion we looked through the windows, and it seemed that the cricketers moving about in the gleaming light outside were creatures in another element. Lancashire had to field, and into the middle they went after taking passionate farewells of their friends. While George Gunn and Whysall were walking out to bat, our bowlers looked at the beautiful wicket. 'Shall we get them out to-day?' perhaps asked Parkin, and Cook, ever resigned to fate, probably replied, 'I doubt it,' and shed a bitter tear. One imagined that one saw Cook begin to perspire violently at the first sight of that immaculate Trent Bridge turf.

The best cricket of the day came in the opening hour. For, while fresh, the Lancashire bowlers worked heroically to prevent the Notts batsmen from settling down. And so, despite the heat, we had a period of antagonism. Moreover, at the day's outset George Gunn was on view, and though he did not score heavily he was always delightful to watch —a batsman in turn handsome and witty, now recapturing the glory that was William Gunn's by means of some exquisitely poised hit to the off, or now impudently inverting classic ways of doing things by some flick or flourish all his own. He wore his white hat and negligently ambled up and down the pitch—Gunn is an artist who always likes to think he is in a fit and proper place in a scene, and, of course, Saturday was a day for white hats and leisureliness. He is a cricketer whose strokes have a sensitiveness difficult to ex-

plain. His bat seems more tactile, more alive, than the bats of other cricketers. As he flicks a ball through the slips, for example, he gives it an intimate sort of emphasis, as though imparting to the stroke something of his own sense of delight in work prettily done. He is a batsman possessing what we call 'touch' in piano-playing. Let a merely competent pianist strike for us the simple chord of C major, and then let us listen to a Pachmann as he plays the same chord. Both of them may give the notes apparently identical tone values, but into Pachmann's chord there will seem to pass some current of his personality. We call it, for want of a better name, 'touch.' So it is with George Gunn's batting. He has the power to make common or garden strokes his very own —hits which are dull when made by average batsmen take on a most engaging bloom when Gunn makes them. And, of course, he has strokes belonging entirely to himself. The writer was sorry to see him out so quickly on Saturday, for as it was always certain that *some* Notts batsmen would 'take root,' it might as well have been Gunn as anybody else.

III

CRICKET AT COLCHESTER

From Lord's and tradition, the Lancashire cricketers journeyed to Colchester and country simple-heartedness. It is excellent, indeed, that Essex plays cricket now and again at Colchester, for then a man from the North has a chance of finding out that Essex is a county possessed of a soul above the bleakness of Leyton. There are places in Essex as pleasant as any in Kent, and on Tuesday afternoon, as one departed from the region of congested bricks and mortar round about Liverpool Street Station—which almost threatened that, after all, Essex really was going to be like

Leyton all over—one's mood changed gratefully; the train emerged into winsome meadow-land. What does he know of Essex that only Leyton knows? The Lancashire cricketers discovered authentic Essex joyously. The team went through fields stained with the crimson of poppies—fields that spread right and left to a horizon of trees. The team flashed by quiet country villages that have likeable names—Hatfield Peverel!—and now a glimpse would come of a windmill against the sky, and now a glimpse of a white house on a hill-top, or a cottage hiding under trees, telling of the intimate calm of country life. The Lancashire cricketers from their train saw paths winding into woods, scarecrows in fields outraging the intelligence of the birds of the air, horses in gallant movement at the plough, and cows standing in running water, with the evening's yellow sun on them. And because these happy sights were seen miles away from home the Lancashire cricketers were in love with them, and the more so because they were, of all places in the world, to be seen in Essex, the county which a Lancashire man in his ignorance has always imagined to be one vast Leyton—has he not had to go there three years out of four to see Essex play cricket?

These things all matter a good deal if you would have a sense of the county a cricket team is standing for. In the match between Lancashire and Essex the willows round the field, the white tents, the river with curved wooden bridges over it near the pavilion, the country folk in the crowd—all these things had to do with the game. For cricket is sensitive to its habitation. Lancashire seemed a less workaday lot at Colchester than usually they seem; years and years fell from their shoulders, and really there might have been a conspiracy going on at Colchester to change everybody into boys again. Lunch in a cool marquee was in itself enough to turn one back to schooldays; and there was veal-

and-ham pie, with ginger-beer to wash it down, and an old lady with a kindly face asking you with a curtsey if you wanted any more.

IV

NORTH *v.* SOUTH AT OLD TRAFFORD

(June, 1923)

We were not always certain of the way this match at Old Trafford had to be looked at—whether as a 'Test match trial' or as a straight fight between North and South at cricket. If it was supposed to be primarily a game played to give opportunity to our best youngsters, why were Hammond and Richard Tyldesley not on view? and if the occasion was mainly the North's best against the South's best, why then, where were Hendren, Howell, and Rhodes? Of course one is not grumbling at the cricket itself; that always had some greatness of style. There were fine shades of skill for the connoisseur, and for the crowd at large there was 'personality,' character—Hobbs, the master, with reputation hanging round his head cloud on cloud; Carr, England's captain of to-morrow, his face clean cut in bronze and his hair uncovered to the wind; Fender, as subtle as he is clever, an alert man, who for fear of missing something has taken to spectacles; Chapman, the image of youth in the summer-time, pink cheek and curly hair; Parkin, two men in one—now erect and marching like a Guardsman, and now possessed of a rip-rap sort of angular alacrity; Woolley, tall and slender, his bat making music out of cricket; Barratt, ponderable and matter-of-fact as Nottingham itself; Tate, a brown Sussex lad; and Mann, solid, imperturbable Mann, planted at mid-off like a tree. Here was 'character' indeed for you; human nature in action to behold as well as runs to count. And on the first day we also had a

delicious June afternoon, with a great crowd sitting in the sun—a crowd immensely contented. And what else is there so thoroughly English as a crowd at a cricket match on a summer's day? . . . It was an achievement in itself to get Hobbs out on the Saturday for less than 100, for he was plainly in good mood. Bowley, of Sussex, went in with him, and 44 were scored for the first wicket, which fell to Parkin. One or two sweet forward strokes did Bowley make. Hearne fell to a catch in the slips in quick time; he seemed to hold out a nerveless bat to a fast-rising ball from Barratt. But with Woolley and Hobbs together the Northern bowlers and fieldsmen must have furtively cultivated notions of long and panting durance in the open air. The South's total reached 90, and these two famous cricketers were undefeated. Carr changed his bowling cleverly and often, as though to keep Hobbs and Woolley as unsettled in mind as the coachmen in the first chapter of *Pickwick*. But it was neither good bowling nor good leadership that put an end to the Hobbs and Woolley menace; it was a wonderful catch—by Carr. At 91 Hobbs glanced a fast ball from Barratt to leg. Most fieldsmen would have just looked at the stroke, contemplating it æsthetically perhaps. Carr leaped forward from short-leg, scooped up the ball and held it. His poise as he fell forward was glorious; the rhythm of it made one deliciously in love with life; filled one with a grand pagan worship of the body's health, vigour, and loveliness of movement. . . . Carr dashed a century by Hobbs to pieces—that is the only way to put it. Hobbs unmistakably was going straight to a century. From the first ball sent to him he promised us a big score; he walked to the wicket, in fact, looking less like a cricketer about to make a century than a cricketer who had an appointment to keep with a century. Not that he was the brilliant Hobbs of old—he permitted too many maiden overs

to be bowled at him for that. (Barratt once sent him eighteen successive balls and he scored from none of them.) But he was as greatly touched with the grand manner as ever: instead of majesty in action he let us see majesty in repose.

V

TATE THE BOWLER

(Written in London, August 20th, 1923, during the England *v.* The Rest Match)

One had scarcely settled down into one's seat after lunch —the savour of cheese and biscuits was still fresh in the mouth—when Tate bowled Chapman off his pads. Then Gilligan got Smith caught in the slips, Hendren taking the ball in a sitting position comical to see. Two runs later Carr was bowled, seventh out at 205, and—incredible tidings—this was the first ball of the last over in the Rest's innings. With the second ball Tate upset Geary's stumps. Tate tried hard with his third ball to do the 'hat trick,' but Macaulay played it safely but unprofitably away to the off. The fourth ball of the over had Macaulay out leg-before-wicket, and the next ball flattened Louden's off stump to the earth. Thus in five balls Tate had taken four wickets for no runs. In eleven balls from lunch five wickets were his for absolutely nothing. His analysis after the interval makes this pretty picture:

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W .	WW
. .	. .

The Rest lost their last six wickets for five runs, made up of three leg-byes and a hit for two by Richard Tyldesley,

who, after his one scoring stroke, had nothing to do but look on and see his side's utter collapse.

The striking point about this devastating attack is that it was done with a new ball, and that, before lunch, when Tate had to bowl with an old ball, his attack had seemed rather to dwindle. His fresh-born power with a ball smooth and glossy would seem to hint that Tate is essentially a swerving bowler. But the truth is that three of his five wickets after lunch were taken by balls that definitely came back *from* the off after a line of flight suggesting a swing away from the bat to the off. Macaulay, on the other hand, played in anticipation of this ball that 'bends' back, only to find it cutting through straight and getting him leg-before.

I have been at the trouble of seeking out from Tate himself the main characteristics of his bowling. He is a delightfully modest boy, and is so much a born bowler, a true son of Nature, that he does not know exactly how he produces his effects. He never consciously spins the ball, but none the less he can make the ball break back, or rather 'bend' back.

It would not be accurate to call this ball a break-back, because, of course, the authentic break-back is spun by the fingers, which, as I have said, Tate never does. Nor would it be accurate to describe this ball as an in-swinger, for the true in-swinger swings from almost the first few yards of its flight through the air, whereas Tate's ball that comes in to the bat has a line of flight as direct almost as his straight ball. Moreover, Tate's in-turning ball has much the same straight flight as his out-turning ball; the difference between the two happens only after they have pitched, and happens so late that the batsman has little time in which to tell t'other from which. Obviously a bowler who is blessed with qualities so rare and subtle is a bowler in a thousand.

VI

MEAD AS STYLIST!

(Gentlemen *v.* Players, Lord's, 1923)

At lunch the Players were 11 for 2 wickets, and during the interval rain fell and persisted for nearly two hours. It fell gently, making the delicious sound of summer showers come over the grass refreshingly, and birds sang in the trees fringing the ground. Play was possible again at ten minutes to four, and straightway Gilligan got the ball to rise from the turf at an unpleasant angle and with immense vitality. Mead and Hearne did well to keep their wickets up just now, and needed a little luck in addition to rare skill. Mead, when he was seven, snicked a ball from Gilligan into the slips, where it hit the earth just in front of Louden, while a rare fast ball beat Hearne's bat to miss the wicket by inches. Gilligan's attack hereabouts had the aspect of an All-England fast bowler. No doubt the rain caused a ball or two to fly from the turf; none the less you could not question Gilligan's magnificent pace and accurate length. He kept this up for half an hour; then he plainly tired, and moreover the wicket dried quickly.

It was while Gilligan bowled at his finest that Mead gave us the best batsmanship so far in the match. He made only 35—a barren harvest for him—but his style came as a revelation to those of us who had not seen him at the wicket since last summer. For a long time, of course, Mead has been regarded as a great run-maker, but he has usually been looked on as possessing more of utility than æsthetic value. Two years ago, at any rate, when he built up his great innings against the Australians at the Oval, his batting was, with all its cleverness, distinctly ugly and unwieldy. To-day he played like a Mead shorn of physical bulk. His innings

had power but never dead weight. Towards the covers he drove in the grand manner—the body falling easefully into the stroke, the bat swinging through free and with all the confidence in the world.

The quick play of Mead's foot-work was astonishing for a man of his size and inelegant shape. Before a ball was halfway through the air his mind obviously had told him what his bat needed to do, and before it had pitched he was in position. Many a time his forcing strokes were made with a smooth incline of the body forward, which passed imperceptibly into his run down the wicket after the ball had gone far into the field. 'Why,' said an old cricketer, watching Mead, 'he's off before he's finished his hit.' And so accurately did he place the ball that he gave the impression that as he was making a stroke he had the position of the whole field in mind, with the gaps gauged to a nicety. To the ball on or just outside his leg stump he moved rapidly across the wicket, but not an inch farther than was necessary to glance it away for fruitful runs.

Mead is a cricketer who seems always to be hitting with the middle of his bat; indeed his bat has a dark hue in the blade's middle which provides the most clinching testimony to the sureness of his aim. But it was the sheer 'handsomeness' of his little innings that compelled our admiration—would you believe it, Mead a stylist! Batting as volatile as this spoke eloquently of an eager and warm nature infusing the whole of Mead's rather solid flesh. The contrast of his lightsome batsmanship with the man's aspect of physical plainness and bigness was intriguing. One thought of the old saying about Socrates—that his body was an unbeautiful temple with a spirit dwelling inside.

GOOD TIDINGS FROM LORD'S

(July, 1922)

THE fun of the world is often enough realized only after it is over and done with. Most of us live in the past or the future, sighing for the good old days or straining eyes after to-morrow's vision. And history flies by and few of us see her thrilling colours; few of us even hear the beating of her wings. Did Paris fully savour the diet of happenings that went on upon Monday night the 20th of June, 1791, when Marie Antoinette fled from the Tuileries; when the Queen lady, in gipsy hat, rode through the night in the glass coach and lo! Fersen drove right northward? Did Paris let itself bask utterly next morning in hot appreciation that now the world was living through the time of its life? Or did not old men go on declaring that things were hardly what they used to be, and young men go on yearning for the better years to come? Happy the man who can see the glory of his own times, who, like Faust, can hail the moment flying: 'Ah, still delay—thou art so fair!'

At cricket, as in all other of our activities, whole pages of history are written every day with most of us unaware. At Lord's during the Gentlemen *v.* Players match of 1922 one heard now and again an old man crying out for another Maclaren, another Stoddart, even while Carr and Chapman flashed from their bats as stirring a beauty as ever shot over a cricket field. Yet when Time the enchanter has finished his spell over that Thursday afternoon at Lord's, when through rosy mists the future looks back on to-day, the future will bow at the thought of the greatness of Lord's in the times when Carr and Chapman lived, and it will sigh that Carrs and Chapmans are no more. Surely, though, there *was* in the air at Lord's in this match the sense that an

uncommon episode in cricket's history was about; that an irregularity was proceeding. You see, since 1914 there has been a dreadful lack of joyous batsmanship. The game no doubt lost the trick of light-heartedness through its durance in the wilderness in the war years. Not by a long way has the effect of war-time on cricket been worked out—a combination of Buckle and J. M. Robertson might well be needed to establish how the game suffered because youth with cricket in it was slain in France; how old masters passed away, taking with them the example style always has for new men; how conditions definitely economic put amateur cricket at a discount; how poor food and shabby environment cast a blight on what of professional ability there was left after the Peace. And then, just as cricket here tentatively sought a way back to the old-time graces, came Armstrong and his host to place it in the dust and knock confidence out.

Can it be wondered at that since May, 1921, the old game stumbled along for a while over the barren plains and turned giddy at the mere thought of the energy of body and spirit needed if the ancient eminences were to be climbed again? We have been living in a period of cricket so impoverished that Hobbs has stood alone by the brilliance of his bat, where a dozen years ago he would have been but one Sir Galahad among many—Maclaren, J. N. Crawford, Hutchings, R. E. Foster, Jessop, A. O. Jones, R. H. Spooner. At Lord's, while Carr and Chapman routed the best professional bowling of our day, a keen cricketer who has been making a pilgrimage to Lord's for years and years confessed his astonishment at the enthusiasm with which a younger man watched the dashing batsmanship. 'You are too young,' he said. 'You think this cricket of Carr and Chapman worth a special frenzy. Yet once on a time we got the like of it every day.' He spoke but the truth. Batsman-

ship was a constant dance of joy in big games when Ranjitsinhji, Mason, S. M. J. Woods, Albert Trott, C. L. Townsend led the pace; while in these last four summers batsmanship has had only too great a cause for lamenting: 'Rarely, rarely comest thou, spirit of delight.' Still, as one has suggested, this very lack recently, of acquaintance with great cricketers who also are happy warriors, has made us the readier to pick them out, given the chance. On the plains the mountains look mightier. Chapman and Carr can scarcely have carved out their history unnoticed; the crowd that had been waiting so long for cricket once more to spread fine feathers seemed to hail it eagerly. 'The good old times again,' said a thousand voices, surely, as Carr drove, and drove straight to the boundary from good length bowling. 'Cricket is itself at last,' as certainly said a thousand more voices as Chapman cut and hit towards cover-point, setting the off-side into a bright light—the off-side, mind you—after all these months in which it has been like silent winter there! No cramped on-side pushes for Carr and Chapman; no waiting and waiting for easy bowling; no timidity because two men were fielding in the deep; no 'two-eyed stance.' Instead, the pliant bat, the swinging bat, the lofty poise on toe-point, the squared shoulders, the defiant eye, the hearty, confident bid for a boundary and glory. How the Lord's field did resound with cheers! The people that had been walking in darkness saw a great light.

The light, it was, of amateur cricket, radiant as ever. Cricket never knew so great a craving for amateur cricket as to-day. Since the war the professionals have had the field largely to themselves, and, frankly, they have in the main turned a game into real industry. One is not, of course, arguing that the professional cricketer is eternally a dull fellow: think of Briggs, Hirst, Abel, Denton, Sugg, J. T. Brown, Woolley. Only it happens that since the war our

professional cricketers have not had before them the happy instances of amateur style that were perpetually before the eyes of professional cricketers in the old days. In a word, the professional lump has not been leavened. It is not an accident that professional cricket struck the bed-rock of dullness in a time not in possession of a Spooner, a Maclaren, a Foster, a Palairet, to charm away routine. Cricketers like Tyldesley and Hirst transcended the professional type—no amateur ever possessed art more spontaneous than theirs; none the less the main characteristic of the professional game is bound by circumstances to be a canny efficiency, wanting the note of fresh-born delight in one's work every day. It is not that the professional batsman is always thinking that making runs is his livelihood; the amateur is not less anxious than he to do well.

The difference in the play of amateur and professional at cricket, in fact, represents just the difference in the cultural influences and influences of environment which have fashioned the one and the other. And what's bred in the bone will come out in a long innings. You had only to look at Chapman, at Lord's in this match, and note his rosy cheeks and smooth skin, the grace of his movement, his air of composure and perfect assurance, to realize straightway that you were witnessing now a sort of fine flowering of all the amenities that had gone towards the making of Chapman in the gracious places of the land—at cricket on sunlit fields in the afternoon's calm, fields far away from the cities and so quiet that the sound of a machine cutting wheat would come through a mile of green land, while the occasional cry, 'Play up, School!' made pleasant echoes. All glory to the humble lad who, though he has to earn bread and butter with his bat's end before he is out of his teens, yet discovers the art wherewith to bedazzle the world, as J. T. Tyldesley did. Genius has no use for the laws which

relate common or garden organisms to their environments. But the average professional cricketer, despite his superb and honourable skill, too frequently tells in his play a sad tale of some struggle for existence, of a life led in grey streets, or in empty villages which only the townsman can see romantically nowadays.

WHITSUNTIDE AT OLD TRAFFORD

(Or, for that matter, on Every County Ground)

LET any Whitsuntide only be reasonably fine and warm and a great multitude will march every morning on Old Trafford. The advance guard of it will be small boys possessed of sustenance in paper parcels, and these small boys will occupy the first row of circling benches round the 'popular' side long before the cricketers themselves are likely to come into view—occupy them, in fact, even as Hallows, say, is shaving himself at home. Happy pilgrimage of youth to Old Trafford at holiday-time in the summer—surely it goes on yet as fervently as it went on a score of years ago.

Unforgettable the vigil we who were lads then passed through on many a Whitsun morning—a vigil which began at half-past nine and lasted till the first glimpse of the umpires' white coats—a long time to get through when you were dying to see Lancashire bat first. Not for us eager boys the diversions old men employ wherewith to cheat tedium during this waiting period; not for us a cup of tea in the refreshment-room while one's seat was held in reserve by one's coat. Perish the thought in every healthy youngster's mind that, once settled in a good place on the ground, he could risk taking his eyes from the stretch of green for a minute. What might not happen of great significance behind his back? There was nothing but to hold on in patience. True, the first hour was overcome easily enough. To begin with, one was kept alive by the feeling of being here at all, so splendidly in possession of a front seat, the hallowed grass right in front—to be touched by a mere stretching of the legs. There was also the animation of the

gathering crowd; the warmer and warmer heat of the sun as it climbed the sky; the first of the day's delicious slakings of thirst with ginger-beer (remember the sudden 'Pop!' down in the shady depths of the packed seats, the squishing noise, the 'Hey up!' of the laughing crowd around). Also to ward tedium away for a while there was the advent of the man selling picture post cards of the Lancashire XI, and the game of guessing the portrait of one player after another without looking at the printed names; the sudden glimpse of somebody in flannels moving across the pavilion front (Who is it? Maclaren? Jackson? Tyldesley? Too far away to see.); the rumour that Lancashire had won the toss and the counter-rumour that Yorkshire had won it. Yet despite all this high and excited life tedium *would* gain bit by bit on us. Some extraordinary lads there were who could actually get absorbed in the latest boys' paper, but how we others despised this sovereign detachment! Unashamedly we would give ourselves over in the last hour of the vigil, between eleven and twelve o'clock, to the fidgets and an aching sense that the fingers on the pavilion clock were simply crawling round. . . . It was in this period—straining as it was boyish patience to the breaking-point—that one suddenly succumbed to the temptation to open the parcel of sandwiches hours in advance of the recognized adjournment for lunch. At first one untied the string intending to take only a tiny bite—the bulk had to be saved for the proper time. Seldom was it saved, though; the lunch interval invariably found us without a crumb between us and utterly empty inside. The taste of those sandwiches, dry and flavoured with last night's evening paper, comes back blissfully to the palate even now.

We men of years may rest easy that these boyish sensibilities were not peculiar to ourselves; to-day and for ever and ever youngsters at Old Trafford in Whit Week will get

as much as we did out of the moments as they pass. Makepeace and Hallows look just as fine and large in their eyes as Albert Ward and Maclaren did in ours. And as unchanged and unchangeable as the boys themselves is everybody else in to-day's holiday crowd at Old Trafford or on any other County ground. This crowd, indeed, is something more than the sum total of the individuals in it; it has a being of its own; it was born in the dim past and will outlive us all. Man and boy, this crowd has been going to Old Trafford in Whit Week these fifty years; man and boy, it will be going there in thrice fifty years to come. A crowd it is of immense humanity, and on a warm day the mellowness of sunshine enters into the ranks. Talk of the hard, grinding North, ignorant Southerner—poor man, have you never seen Old Trafford settling down after lunch, all of us huddled intimately, basking in the afternoon's light, the old pavilion seeming to drowse? The rigour of the game is appreciated keenly enough by Old Trafford's crowd, but it is in its most lovable moment towards a golden day's fall just as the play gets a little stale and attention on the cricketers begins to dwindle. Then the multitude seeks for amusement of its own making, and now's the time for men of humour. A policeman is walking in dignity along the boundary's edge. The crowd suddenly sees him with one eye. And with a single voice chant the packed thousands: 'Left, right! Left, right!' keeping time to the solemn movements of the policeman, who endeavours hard to seem utterly oblivious that a cynosure is being made of him. In this hour of Old Trafford's 'sweet doing nothing' have you ever heard the crowd entertain itself by singing in two-part harmony a ditty about *Down by the Ohio*? A good time to have the ears ravished by this musical performance is in the middle of an interminable partnership against Lancashire's bowling, when some impregnable bats have seemingly put

the game to a standstill. Then is it that music is made to soothe Old Trafford's breast; *Down by the Ohio*, with a cadence of linked sweetness long drawn out, goes into the mild air. And after the protracted dying away of that cadence the crowd, as a man, applauds its own waggish self. 'Hooray!' it says, laughing the broadest laugh that ever was. Does a wicket fall at last? Very well, Old Trafford now loosens its legs. 'Up! Up! Up!' the multitude chants, and every man jack of them stands up. Does a new batsman come in? Very well, again; the multitude chants, 'Down! Down! Down!' and down once more it sits. Behold Old Trafford's crowd in this hour of its content and call the critic a fool who talks of the unbending North and its economic man.

The cricket on view in Whit Week at Old Trafford is as good as the crowd every year, and that is saying a lot. Lancashire against Yorkshire, and afterwards Lancashire against Kent—there's spice and variety for you—the one match of Cerberus and blackest midnight born; the other making for us a sunshine holiday. It is an excellent idea to let the Kent match follow the Yorkshire match—Kentish Sir Byng after the Ironsides; cricket as pastoral after cricket as intolerable drama. Think of Kent at Old Trafford in Whit Week, and a Lancashire cricket lover will find his mind astir with memories of many a gracious day in the refreshing air. Who forgets the '97 match when Mold shot down his seven wickets, Kent having led Lancashire by 78 runs? Lancashire then wanted 207 for victory, and Johnny Briggs won the game by three wickets with a fierce outburst of batsmanship worth 60. Who forgets C. J. Burnup and his day's innings on Whit Monday, 1900? He was on view from midday to the time of shadows, working away as quietly as a mouse. The surprise of us all when the scoreboard announced his 200 was tremendous. Who forgets

that Whit Thursday, a day of scarifying heat, which saw J. T. Tyldesley smite the Kent attack right and left till his total was 295? Who forgets the heroic labours of Fielder that day—his sweaty shirt, his noble determination? This was Woolley's first game at Old Trafford; he had a time of tribulation at first. He was out for nothing, missed catch after catch, and got a solitary wicket for some 60 runs. But on Whit Saturaday he let us see his quality in a dazzling innings. Who forgets E. W. Dillon, the graceful left-handed batsman, and the catch with which A. H. Hornby got him out on a Whit Friday years ago? Who forgets Bradley and his long run?—the man went almost to the boundary before beginning to bowl. Who forgets Blythe, loveliest of all slow bowlers, and Kenneth Hutchings, image of South Country grace, dark, sinuous, his black hair ashine in the sun, his soft flannels? Kent has ever sent happy cricketers to make Old Trafford's Whitsun holiday; sparkling wine of the game Kent has to give wherever she goes, wine all the more refreshing if it washes down—as often it has done—a bitter pill just administered to Lancashire by Yorkshire. This year, as ever, Kent will have a glowing welcome from Old Trafford; from the small boys; from their fathers, who, though they may be looking with admiring eyes at the art of Woolley, yet bear in mind Frank Marchant and J. R. Mason; from their mothers, even, sitting in the ladies' pavilion, some of them in love still with a memory of Kenneth Hutchings. Yes, Old Trafford will greet Kent gladly enough any year; and should Collins get down on his bat and stay there, as he is usually inclined to do at Old Trafford, it is possible Old Trafford will once again say unto itself: 'Let there be music; let *Down by the Ohio* steal upon our ears with a dying fall.'

ON A FRESH CRICKET SEASON

THE beginning of cricket was fixed by Lord's for round about the 1st of May, and ostensibly it began then, and was duly reported in the newspapers. But here and there a cricketer of spirit was made to understand that the season was upon him before this; it came, for him, a day sooner at least than the rest of us were aware; the very instant, in fact, that a spring light woke him one morning and stirred in his mind a solitary thought: 'To-day we leave for the South; to-day we set out on the summer's first tour.'

Nothing can go wrong with him on this blessed morning. He packs his bag blissfully, beholds the faded labels on it, eloquent of many a golden Odyssey. Lovely sequence of names—Canterbury, Taunton, Worcester, Horsham, Tonbridge! It was at Horsham, our happy cricketer tells himself, he saw the season die last August. How far away did May seem on that afternoon when the sun burned out and he packed the bag for the last time and said 'Good-bye' to his companions! Did he not wish then with all his heart for Maytime back again? Did he not then ask himself why, when the season's beginning was with him, he had not shouted for joy the day long? Well, a spring morning is here for his delight again. Let him hang on to every minute of it, revel in a delighted sense of the time of the year, tell himself over and over: 'I am getting the best out of the day as it passes; I am missing nothing!'

Observe, happy man, from your bedroom window, at this moment as you prepare yourself for a journey to the South—observe the passers-by along the road opposite. They are going to work, going to the city, there to live stuffily in one dingy spot, while you—while you are going away for the beginning of cricket. To-night these poor

souls will pass by your house again, back from the city, but you will not be there to see them return. By then you will be at the other end of England; perhaps you will have just been taken by the hotel porter to your room, just have unpacked, washed, and gone out into the delicious streets, to ravish yourself in them with the feeling of the miles you have covered that day, and also with the feeling of romantically settling down now in a new place.

Does it matter that as the tour begins our cricketer finds a train crowded as it leaves London Road Station behind, with its mile's view of slate roofs on every hand? Not a bit of it. The other people in the compartment are plainly the veriest birds of passage; prosaic shortness of distance is to be their portion. They must depart at Stockport, or at the most at Crewe. When Market Street and Deansgate are at their crisis of unloveliness and congestion, our happy cricketer is moving through green fields; he is getting intimate glimpses into country life, as from the spacious rolling view outside the carriage window his eye detaches a thatched cottage with a postman knocking at the door, or a village street lazy in noon warmth—it is underneath him now, for the train rattles thunderously over a bridge. And now it is gone!

At Wellington, or in some such place deep in the garden of our land, the journey is broken; there is a change here. The Manchester train goes out, leaving you exquisitely aware that you are now quite out of touch with Manchester. Your connection arrives—a train that obviously has never been in Manchester. The people on it have just as obviously never been in Manchester. Here, unmistakably, you are in a fresh hemisphere, entering on the journey's last lap through a drowsy landscape. And how peaceful the closing hour of a day's railway travel is! The mild agitations of the morning—felt even by a happy cricketer—

have spent themselves. The senses are tired at last of responding to new scenes, new sounds, new odours. Through too much unfolding of strange life about him our pilgrim feels an agreeable tedium; he drops into a reverie. . . . After Oxford, Cambridge, and then Leicester—always lots of fun at Leicester. Must look out for Astill's swinger, though. Yorkshire after that; suppose they'll give us the usual hot stuff. Where do we play Kent this year? Good Lord, at Gravesend! Why not on the Angel Ground at Tonbridge —glorious place! Wonder if my off-drive will be better this year. Must get my foot to it more. That's a nice piece of wood Smith picked for me; must get it going to-morrow at Oxford. Might easily pick up runs for nothing at Oxford; always a few green bowlers there this time of the year. A good start's everything. . . .

On the carriage seat he notices a newspaper, and there is a paragraph in it giving the County XI for its first match. He sees his name and is thrilled. After the winter's obscurity he is to become an item in the public news once more. In a day or two from now men in Newcastle and Woking, men he has never seen or heard of, telegraphists, sub-editors, and compositors by livelihood, will be bandying his name about. 'Blank drove Benskin and completed his fifty in sixty-five minutes.' This will be read on the Manchester Exchange, in the Reform Club even, in Back George Street among the grey cloths, in Gorton, and in Westhoughton.

Will he run into form quickly? But he has no use for misgivings in this hour of May content. He is master of his fate, captain of his break-back. He sees, in his splendid vision, a hundred moments that the summer holds for him—the yellow stumps standing upright as he reaches the crease at the fall of the first wicket, with the white line of the popping crease just broken in the middle where Smith took his guard; the fieldsmen moving back to position as he gets his

bat ready; the trees away in the distance behind the bowler. He sees the bowler coming towards him, face set; he feels his bat circling in the air, feels the ecstasy that comes with a hit clean in the blade's middle; he sees a fieldsman on the off-side boundary picking up the ball after it has been thrown back into the field from the crowd. He sees Lord's again, basks in the sense of walking to it on a June morning down the St. John's Wood Road; he sees himself 'going on at the Nursery End,' the while the score-board announces 'Bowler 7' and the pavilion bloods look at their cards and pronounce his name. He sees all the lovely cricket fields in England beckoning to him; he sees the sun mellowing on an afternoon somewhere in brown Sussex as cool drink is brought and bowlers slake their thirsts, while away on the field's edge a man in white lies prone on the grass even as he, our happy cricketer, stands erect at the wicket, 86 not out. And, best vision of all, he sees himself 'not out' even to the close of play, privileged to remove his pads, to change from his warm flannels, to leave the ground, to go here, there, and everywhere that evening, to go to bed, to get up in the morning; privileged to pass through all these spaces between one day's play and another and to remain not out all the time! Moments of vision indeed. To-morrow and to-morrow—days in the sun, luscious grass to walk on, wind running over the body. Happy man, this is the time of the year for you; August will never seem so far away again.

The train's whistle blows; pace slackens. Here you are, and the others, cricketers all, with the season well and beautifully launched. No runs yet, maybe, and no wickets down; but a paradisal day already lived through.

TO ANY COUNTY

THE old cricketers are in agreement that the game to-day is not at its best. Of course things are never as good as they used to be in any part of life; old eyes look back through the enchanting mists of distance. But even some of us who are not old cricketers—those of us who have memories that reach back no further than a dozen years—are day by day compelled to admit that cricket is at the moment below itself.

Bowlers are 'all over the place' with their length; batsmanship is too frequently unlovely, unadventuresome. 'Why didn't you hit out more?' I asked a county cricketer the other day, after suffering a monotonous hour from him. 'Hit out?' expostulated he. 'Why, there were no loose balls about!' What does the old cricketer think of this defence? Suppose F. S. Jackson when he was face to face with Trumble and Noble had 'hit out' only on the occasions he discovered a loose ball! He would have starved to death for runs. Suppose a batsman of J. T. Hearne's day had waited for long hops and half-volleys! September might have come upon him before his score was perceptible. Batsmen are forgetting the offensive side of their art; they are forgetting how to make good bowling indifferent. They are turning batsmanship into a wholly defensive occupation.

The writer's complaint against Loamshire* just now is not that the team's form is unreliable. The trouble with Loamshire is deeper rooted than momentary loss of swift match-winning efficiency. It is, as a fact, a trouble which was manifest even in the side's victorious days of last summer and the summer before. The truth is, Loamshire, in common with most of the counties, has for a long time been

* For 'Loamshire' read any county the cap seems to fit.

a rather graceless team to look at; it has at its best tended more and more to take the shape of a sort of machine designed to move as safely as may be along the lines where victory lies. That conquest might come, Loamshire has time after time rather scourged itself—and incidentally scourged a spectator or two here and there; it has too many times let the free spirit of cricket go hang. Will it be considered fanciful to suggest that winning at cricket is but a by-product (in Mr. Shaw's term) of the game—that the cricketer's first duty is to see that cricket shall never lose its glad heart and its urbanity? Is Loamshire cricket in danger of becoming cannily utilitarian with the philosophy of the main chance at the back of it?

Loamshire has many things to be proud of—a stately cricket field, and a committee second to none in the country at the management of what is called the business side of the game. But, also (a Loamshire man here bears it fondly in mind), Loamshire has a tradition. Are we making certain, week in and week out, that Loamshire's conception is one with room in it for the poetry of the game? Does not Loamshire cricket take its mission in the championship race a little too seriously for that? A great notion it is, of course, to get through all your matches victoriously; but winning is not everything. A little (for poetry's sake anyhow) depends on the way the victory is won. Loamshire cricketers have of late years been so intent on looking like conquering heroes that they have not always remembered the duty of a cricketer always to look pleasant. Frankly, the team is getting the reputation all over the country of an over-serious team—a collection of cricketers that have taken the pursuit of efficiency to an extreme not congenial to the pleasantries of cricket. Loamshire knows what is what in business; confidently, then, one puts a suggestion before it: That poetry in cricket is as sound a 'paying proposition' as any. Be-

cause gracious cricket means attractive cricket. And attractive cricket means big crowds. You are not certain to get the crowds following you day in and day out, if only the job of winning matches is looked after. You might lose them, and what then—if your team is merely 'utilitarian'? The crowd is not going to run after a team of workmen in moments of defeat. But if a team is compact of delightful artists the crowd will fill the ground every time.

So we may see that the purely utilitarian cricket philosophy is not even sound business; it means a team that cannot afford to lose. What is the most attractive XI in the country with the man in the street? It is Sussex. And who cares twopence whether Sussex is winning or losing? Sussex in defeat is a more pleasant sight for the eyes of cricketers than most other teams in victory. Better for the game and better for the balance-sheet is a genial philosophy of cricket to move a side to action.

It so happens that the artist-cricketer has, at all periods in the game's history, been just the very cricketer most likely to possess the match-winning knack. Take the finest of Loamshire XI's of recent years: all of them were cricketers that played the game with gusto, men who sought self-expression in cricket first, and the championship points last. Yet this team of happy warriors, far from establishing that the fine art of cricket is a matter of no 'utility value,' established quite the contrary—at any rate it was an invincible team, easily first in the championship.

One is not here asking for the moon; cricketers of the — and — quality are unknown to-day, not only in Loamshire, but in the length and breadth of the kingdom. But the philosophy of cricket that the Loamshire XI of those days expressed in action can be cultivated again—in any season, whatever the technical value of the 'playing material.' And in cricket, as in most other pursuits, action will reveal the

presence of a philosophy somewhere. The canny philosophy in vogue in the counties to-day is made articulate in nearly every match. The cricketers themselves probably do not know they are expressing it. That is how a philosophy works—insidiously making mouthpieces even of those innocent of it. A young cricketer coming to, say, Old Trafford in 1904 had no choice but to play a cavalier game; his environment impelled him to it. And to-day it seems a young cricketer coming to Old Trafford has little choice but to play a shrewd Fabian game, for Fabianism is now unfortunately the current philosophy of action at Old Trafford.

Time after time Old Trafford has announced (at the seasons' beginnings) a stirring enough faith: 'We shall fight hard for the championship; we shall not spare ourselves in conquest.' A stirring faith indeed, but is it the cricketer's faith? Does it not sound a little like the professional footballer's? Would not cricket be better served in some such credo as this: 'We are playing the summer game, and, win or lose, sunshine shall enter into our cricket. The championship best becomes the side that can win it gracefully. A frowning countenance mocks the laurel wreath. Seek for the championship and conceivably you will not find it'? Time was when a Lancashire or a Yorkshire man was able to go on any cricket field in England where his county was playing and to recognize his county's cricket at a glance—just as a man going into a concert will straightway recognize his favourite music. Is it certain to-day that a Lancashire or a Yorkshire man will recognize his county's cricket? May he not now and again confuse it—the spirit of it, if not the technique—with the cricket of Nottinghamshire round about the 'eighties? There's an example for you of the influence on the loveliest of games of a bleak philosophy! The Nottinghamshire XI's of a certain dismal

period contained many a cricketer fashioned by Providence to play a happy game. But the philosophy of Trent Bridge in those days dried up all their humours. A warning here for lovers of Loamshire cricket of to-day, to see to it that there are no cricketers of spirit in the Loamshire team who, because of a rather wintry philosophy, find it hard to turn to the sun. The fact is that the burden of championship ambitions is heavy; it can be borne tolerably only by cricketers rich in skill, art, and spirit. Better, surely, for any county side at the moment to cast aside more ambition than it can 'live up to' with a smiling face, and to go its ways modestly and glad-heartedly until time shall dower it again (as time will when it is ready) with cricketers big enough to fight for a championship in care-free vein.

J. W. H. T. DOUGLAS

THE other July J. W. H. T. Douglas scored a century for Essex—his first in county matches for two years. This great cricketer, it is good to think, is calmly passing out his declining years at the game in the ranks of a side untroubled by ambition—a county well away from the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave. Douglas has been through storm and stress, and at last he is in haven. And does he now know that we loved him even in those times when his very name was a bone of contention—even in those lurid days of 1921 when Armstrong rode an Attila ride over our cricket fields, and we made Douglas the scapegoat for all, or nearly all, the blunders committed by English cricket? Perhaps we had a strange way then of expressing our affection for him. I heard a clergyman at one of the Test matches denounce Douglas to high heaven. 'How long, O Lord,' he asked, 'are we to suffer this man?' And the crowd around sighed in devout response: 'How long?' For it is only the truth that Douglas, as an England captain, time and time again strained our patience and philosophy to breaking-point. But to-day he surely understands—realizes that while our pointed tongues chastised him there was not one of us who did not know in his heart that Douglas was the noblest Roman, the one English cricketer tough and big enough to stand face to face with Armstrong as our leader. Why, to choose as we did the gay and amenable Tennyson for our main counter to Armstrong was like placing a velvet glove into a grip of iron.

Douglas was ever a fighter. For him, one imagines, a game must always be a challenge to a man's strong right arm. Never for Douglas has contest in the honest fresh air seemed the right place for intellectual fine shades—for your

plots and stratagems. He has the Englishman's unspoken impatience of the very thought that cold-blooded Machiavellism might prevail in a game over the giant heart and giant strength of limb. There is the grandeur of primitive warfare in Douglas's cricket; he puts an elemental force into the game, thrusting his way through it because of his determined heart, his sheer thew and sinew. A fig for your pallid students of cricket, fighters by the book of arithmetic! Let us have our contention raw and bloody, with no man's head so empty of royal passion that he may, as he fights, be up to miserable subterfuge. Did you ever see Douglas bowling to Carter, the Australian, in one of the 1921 Test matches? Well, any child could have pointed out that Carter's main stroke was to the leg-side, and that a fieldsman was needed near the wicket to stop the hit. Douglas must have understood a point so simple. And yet Douglas bowled without a fieldsman there to checkmate Carter's principle trick. Why? Douglas had, as England's captain, as much common sense as anybody—make no mistake of that. Is it not possible that Douglas chose to tackle Carter man against man—his honest ball against Carter's honest bat? 'Re-arrange my field for the likes of him? Give me the ball; I'll *bowl* him out!' May we not conceive him as muttering this to himself as he walked back to his bowling place, head down, black hair burnished, and all the time rubbing the ball into the flesh of his left forearm passionately? 'Dogged does it' was clearly the motto of this lion-hearted man in those dark days of English cricket; he had a magnificent confidence in the dowry of physical strength given to him by Nature; it could not, he must have told himself a thousand times, fail him in a crisis—simply could not; for was it not a noble strength, and had he not a noble faith?

He is a cricketer who always gives the impression that

everything he does is done by dint of tremendous will-power. Even as he runs to the wicket to bowl, you would swear that he was forcing his every step onward by power of mind. For he has never been a man of supple limb; since his young days, as Robert Lynd once finely put it, he has walked and run like a man in armour. As he reaches the bowling crease a convulsion goes on in his body, and out of him comes a last burst of energy and temper—and all of that energy and temper goes into the ball. When Douglas was at his finest he seemed, as he hurled the ball at the batsman, to put into it a most implacable enmity; it would bounce from the pitch a living, wrathful thing. His batsmanship, too, is the expression of Douglas's will. He was not born to bat; he compelled himself to bat. And as he bends himself over his blade he is constantly the image of sullen defiance. He seems aware that he has none of your artist-batsman's fine feathers to spread—no dazzling strokes. Very well then; he will spite the bowlers all the same, spite even Nature for withholding from him a punitive bat, while she gave to him a punitive heart. He faces the attack with eyes of distrust; and between the bowling of one ball and another he will gnaw at his glove stubbornly. Yet once, in the Test match at Leeds in 1921, Douglas as a batsman assumed the grand stature. The day was going cruelly against England; the gods themselves appeared to be tormenting us. Hobbs was stretched on an operating-table at England's darkest period—5 out for 60, and Australia 407! Tennyson had a crippled hand. In this hopeless prospect Douglas's spirit was indomitable; for four hours he put a straight bat to the onslaught of Gregory and Macdonald. That day Tennyson played one of the greatest 'rescue' innings in the history of cricket, and Douglas was his companion in a forlorn-hope partnership which was most moving to see. In this watchdog innings of Doug-

las's he had his thumb driven inwards by Gregory, and when he got back to the pavilion he could hardly get his glove off, and the thumb was horrible to look at. No hint all day did Douglas give on the field of the pain martyrizing him.

It is, of course, as a bowler that Douglas will be always discussed in admiring language by cricketers. In his heyday he was perhaps more deadly than anybody else in England on a good wicket while the ball was new. Then would he swing in to the batsman one ball, and the next swing out, with no sign to be got from the line of flight of the ultimate direction of the ball. His pace from the turf, as I have suggested, was formidable. Little or no artifice went into his bowling; he did not need artifice with so killing a battle-axe edge and power. But Douglas is not to be talked of merely as a skilled cricketer; he has always been too big a man for that. England has had few captains so unsubtle as he, maybe; she certainly never has known a captain more courageous. Seven times in succession Armstrong overthrew England with Douglas our chief, and at the finish Douglas was undaunted. Let no man say Douglas led England to defeat in those mournful days; rather let it be proclaimed that Douglas was England's captain in battles against odds, and that he became heroic through frustration and won our hearts after all.

SPOFFORTH

('The Demon Bowler')

WHAT manner of man was Spofforth? How did he bowl? Was he fast, fast medium, or did he mix them? Did the man himself, his personal aspect, get on the nerves of batsmen? These are questions typical of the curiosity in our age about 'The Demon Bowler.' The great cricketer can establish no permanent affirmations of his prowess; Spofforth was the strongest living force in the game some four decades ago, and to-day his might is with the might of Bahram; he is no more than a name pronounced by greybeards in the ears of their children.

There are, of course, young sceptics about in these times. 'Spofforth?' they ask. 'See, now, was he post- or pre-Fuller Pilch? The Demon Bowler? Well, well, perhaps he was—in the early 'eighties' view of the demoniac. But, we ask you, how could the early 'eighties know what velocity really is capable of? The conception of velocity changes from age to age; it is not a fixed idea. The early 'eighties looks a sleepy age to us who have seen the speeding-up since the twentieth century came in. The aeroplane does give one a positive idea of velocity. But the early 'eighties! Come, come, what could they know of speed then? The 'eighties went about in four-wheelers—and, bless us, active men and women were from time to time knocked down in the streets by four-wheelers, though how they managed it is rather baffling. Obviously their view of pace was different from this age's, which boasts an endorsed licence. Would your Spofforth have seemed streaked lightning to-day? We pause for a reply.'

But the old men, who saw the glory of Spofforth, need

not argue on this point; they are, indeed, at liberty to admit that Spofforth was not strictly a fast bowler in his best years. The belief that he came into George Lohmann's classification of 'brute-strength' bowlers they can put down to callow innocence. Spofforth bowled fast in 1878, on his first visit to England, and that his speed was alarming has been testified by C. W. Alcock—for one—who, as he lived long enough to know Richardson and Lockwood, must be accepted as a witness with a modern notion of velocity. When Spofforth came to England again in 1882, though, and accomplished his mightiest deeds, he was no longer a fast bowler pure and simple. It is doubtful whether he ever was one, for the Hon. E. Lyttelton has spoken of the Spofforth of 1878 as a bowler with a 'marvellous change of length and speed.' And the characteristic of his work in his heyday has been settled once and for all by Lord Harris in these sentences: 'It is quite a mistake to suppose Spofforth won his great reputation in England as a fast bowler. True, he was very fast before he came to England in 1878, and on occasion I have seen him bowl very fast here, but, so he told me, he soon found that on our softer wickets he could do so much that, instead of bowling fast with an occasional "judgment" ball, as he called it, he changed to bowling the medium-paced ball as a rule, with an occasional fast one, and so became one of the best bowlers ever seen; in my opinion the best I have ever played.' Here, in fact, we get at the real value of Spofforth's contribution to cricket—and a great cricketer's work is not wholly to be judged by wickets taken or runs scored, but by his expansion of the technique that came to his hand in his day.

The claim has been put forward by admirers of Spofforth that he was the first bowler to study variation of pace. No slight to Spofforth's genius will happen if this claim is shown to be extravagant. Great men do not begin epochs,

but rather are a fine flowering of them. It is only the 'freak artists' who cannot be seen as links in a chain of development. Spofforth's indebtedness to English bowlers—pioneers of our game in Australia—has not been insisted on half enough, yet Spofforth himself has gladly and generously admitted it. In our winter of 1863–4 Parr's XI visited Australia, and with them was Tarrant. 'When I saw Tarrant,' Spofforth once told Mr. W. A. Bettesworth, 'he was the fastest bowler I ever saw. I tried to copy him. My one aim was to bowl as fast as possible, without any other idea at all.' But ten years after this, W. G. Grace's team went to Australia, and then it was that Spofforth was put on the track of his greatness. 'When Southerton and Alfred Shaw came over to Australia their bowling was a revelation, and I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't copy them, and Tarrant as well, and try to combine all three. I soon found that variation in pace was the most important thing of all.' Thus the master pays his debt, does justice to the great pioneers—those that had to be quit of a world with their work to be done. 'W. G.' and Spofforth were inveterate foes on the cricket field. An intriguing thought (as they say in the drawing-rooms) that in these two old masters we have a case of cause and effect! We have seen how Spofforth was prompted to cultivate variations by Shaw and Southerton in 1874. Well, some half-dozen years earlier, bowling was either fast or slow; the cricketer was a rare bird who could get the two paces under one control. And Grace scattered fast bowling all over the field just as easily as he scattered slow bowling. It was Grace that drove bowlers into low cunning. Can we say, then, that Grace was the cause of Shaw and Southerton, who were, in a way, the cause of Spofforth? Of course Spofforth expanded the art of variation immensely by bringing his own keen brain to the study of it. Not even George Lohmann or George Giffen had a

subtler changefulness. He saw no use in 'leg traps' or 'off theories'; he was always making a direct attack on the batsman's defence. He was master of break-back, yorker, top spin, and 'hanging' spin. He would 'deliver' from various points of the bowling crease, and so obtain different lines of flight into the batsman. Also he would bowl now from the edge of the crease and now straight over the wicket—and obtain much the same line of flight! Even the onlooker in the pavilion was frequently at a loss whether his run to the wicket suggested a fast or a slow ball; batsmen were afflicted with dubiety even after the ball had left the bowler's grip. There is a story of a young Cambridge cricketer who, certain that the slow one was coming along, played forward gracefully. A second later Blackham, the wicket-keeper, was addressing him most politely: 'Your bat, sir?'

But we can no more account for the prowess of Spofforth wholly in terms of technique than we can account for any man's genius in terms of technique. Lancashire once had a bowler in the XI who possibly knew every trick of the trade that ever was, but because he was short of 'personality' he could not get a footing even on the upper slopes of greatness. There is no doubting that Spofforth did 'get on batsmen's nerves.' He had a dark, Mephistophelian aspect; tall, sinuous—the 'spirit of denial' to highly strung cricketers. An old player once spoke somewhat in these terms to the writer, of his first taste of Spofforth: 'It was at the Oval. I were in right form and not afeared of him when I goes in to bat. He'd just taken a wicket, but I walks into t' middle jaunty like, flicking my bat, makin' rare fancy cuts through t' slips as I went over t' grass. Well, at the Oval you have to pass t' bowler on the way to t' crease, and as I got near Mr. Spofforth he sort of fixed me. His look went through me like a red-hot poker. But I walks on past him

along t' wicket to t' batting end. And half-way down somethin' made me turn round and look back at him over my shoulder. And there he was, still fixin' me with his eye.' One can even to-day get a good idea of Spofforth's demoniac air from the portraits in Mr. Beldam's *Famous Bowlers*. They were taken long after his days in the sun were over, yet there lurks in the pictures of the man a sense of sinister power. The bowling action is Spring-heel-Jackish; the form of him lithe in an inimical way; his face set in hard, predatory lines. He was the Australian of Australians, a stark man who let in with him the coldest blast of antagonism that ever blew over a June field. Armstrong had Falstaffian humours compared with Spofforth. We shall not look upon his like again, no doubt. At which sentiment all honest batsmen will say, in Mr. Pecksniff's language: 'What a soothing reflection is that!'

THE FIRST MATCH

THE first match of the cricket season has been played. It happened the other evening on a stretch of earth as virgin of grass as the African veld. Behind the bowler's arm was a block of tenement houses. Now and again from the doors of these houses a Mrs. Jones or a Mrs. Carruthers would emerge, and after looking closely into the heart of the conflict would shrilly inquire: 'Where's our Willy? Come in, you young divil; yer farther wants yer.' Thereupon some inglorious, but by no means mute, Hobbs discovered himself foiled in the hour of triumph. He might at this point be wanting only a beggarly four past cover to complete his century, and now out of the gaudy light of glory Fate was snatching him. He had to surrender his militant bat, pass from the scene, go home and fetch the coals up. 'Yer can't have yer innin's out when yer gets back,' was the fiat that was sure to come to his ears as he put his coat on. 'Yer've given yer bat up!' There's where the canker gnawed.

This great game was not arranged by Lord's, and sometimes it was conducted not so much under the rules of Lord's as under Queensberry rules. A batsman while playing the ball would miss it, and it would thud against a huge brick wall on which three wickets were drawn in chalk. 'Out!' would howl the bowler, who if he were big enough was also the umpire. And the field was invariably with him to a man. 'Yer out! Give yer bat up!' Expostulation stared from the batsman's face at this. 'Out be blowed! It didn't never 'it nowhere near th' wickets!' If he chanced to be a small batsman the bowler showed no inclination to bandy words. Down the pitch he would move to administer justice by strength of his right arm. 'Give yer blinkin' bat up else yer'll cop it.' The batsman, name of Jenkins (*soi-disant*

Hendren), had to go. Maybe he would depart not only from the crease but from the field altogether, announcing to the world as he went, and setting the tidings to a chant in the Lydian mode: 'Bill Brown's a cheater—can't bowl for nuthink.'

The wickets in this Olympian game were, as I have said, drawn in chalk on a wide wall. Whoever designed them, plainly was a bowler himself. In the olden times at Hambledon the bowlers used to get up early in the morning and mark out the pitch on the 'nobbliest' bit of land they could find. In this match between Union Street and Summer Place the bowler had exercised a privilege not unlike that of the Hambledon men. He gave his chalk freely to the erection of his wickets, which possessed immense height and width. Whenever the ball hit them it would be made white on one side. Batsmen who owned mother wit and the muscle to support it would parry the bowler's aggressive 'Out!' flung at them each time the ball beat the bat by demanding with implicit irony: 'Wher's the chork mark on the ball? Garn, that's not a noo mark. It 'it them wickets wot we was usin' for practice larst night. 'Ere's the noo wickit, my lad. Carry on. We've got yer licked this time. Play up, Union Street!'

The match passed through widely different moods. It began with every combatant armed to the teeth, so to say. The bowler, before going into action, swung his arm round furiously. 'Get ready, lads,' he declaimed. 'Goin' ter bowl fast ternight; chuckin' googlies fer good.' Meanwhile the batsman was seeking to get himself into an attitude he had once seen assumed by greatness at Kennington Oval. 'Andy Sandham,' he said, and then he made sundry wonderful curves through the air with his bat, playing an imaginary ball wherever it was his fancy to direct it. The fieldsmen drew a tight net round the bat—the nearest man to the wicket, it seemed, was the one most likely to get the bat,

and in consequence an innings, at the fall of the first wicket. It so happened, though, that to-night Andy Sandham was in great form. He drove powerfully, and the match was stopped while Horace Wilkinson, the youngest combatant, climbed over Moggridge's wall and threw the ball back. There was a little further hot disputation here between bowler and batsman. 'Yer out. It's allus "out" over Moggridge's wall.' Apparently this ruling had been rendered necessary by experience, Mr. Moggridge in the past having retained every ball that had disturbed his reflections on Form and Weights as he sat in his retreat in the summer evening's sun. But Andy placed himself beyond the law to-night. 'It's my ball, and if I'm out yer can orl put yer coats on and 'op it.' And thus he persisted in his mastership at the crease. And as he did so a strange lethargy fell on the fieldsmen. Point and cover-point went in for wrestling, as a *divertissement*; long-field met Miss Auriol Tompkinson, and, after a few courtier-like addresses to the lady as she went by, he shouted after her, 'Cedar mop!'—which, one inferred, was an oblique reference to the way her mother had decreed she should wear her hair, in an ambitious moment, some months ago.

Once the batsman hit the ball far across the brickcroft, and the parson happened to be passing. 'Thank yer, sir,' howled the bowler. 'Leave it—leave it, sir,' howled the batsman, starting his fifth run. The parson hesitated, then threw it back to the bowling crease. 'Interferin' old —,' murmured Sandham. He was defeated at last, and the bat taken from him despite his assurances that he 'hadn't been ready.' The game woke up here. "Ow many are yer?' inquired the captain of Summer Place. 'Thirty-eight,' responded Sandham, dropping the 't' in 'thirty.' 'Yer've been putting 'em on,' came the accusation from all over the field. Batsmen, it seems, are in Union Street League cricket

trusted to keep their own scores. 'I mean twen'y-eight,' admitted Andy, feeling the weight of evidence dead against him.

As the light faded it was difficult to follow the contest to its crisis. Mrs. Carruthers or Mrs. Jones or Mrs. M'Dermott did great damage now from their respective doorsteps. Even those spared to fight on got a little confused. 'Yer've 'ad your innin's onst. Get out of it!' This cry went up time and again into the darkening sky. Then suddenly over the field flashed rumours of the first importance to those that had no coals to fetch up. 'Chips and fried fish is ready at 'Uddleston's.' This indeed meant the end. (It was, at any rate, usually chips and fried fish that caused play to be abandoned for the day amongst boys of a score or so years ago; in our times perhaps the second house at the pictures serves the same purpose—but what a poor substitute! Memory still holds that whiff of vinegar, the squelching noise as one shook the bottle, and the hailstone rattle of the salt out of those capacious tin castors.)

Union Street and Summer Place now went their opposite ways, but as they did so the ancient feud broke out again, with derision the weapon, and continued till the strongest lungs could not penetrate the distance and the houses between foe and foe. The more or less Parthian thrusts were: 'Call yerself Andy Sandham—wait till we get yer on our middin.' 'Our Willie, come and get the coal up!' (Very mocking this.) 'Summer Place? Garn! Ours is a nice 'ouse, ours is!'

CRICKET AT BRAMALL LANE

(Notes from a Diary)

[Being an account, written 'on the spot,' of the play in the Lancashire and Yorkshire match at Sheffield on Whit Monday, 1922—the wildest day of cricket in the writer's experience. Yorkshire were batting nearly all the time, eager for points on the first innings, Lancashire's score having been 307.]

LIFE no less than art achieves now and again an expressive picture. In the scene at Bramall Lane we had a typical representation of Lancashire and Yorkshire cricket; the stern spirit of it was given significant form by the crowd's mountainous bulk, the hard antagonism of the play, the ugliness of the setting of chimneys and huddled tenements, all of them telling of the competitive life that is led in this part of England. Almost the only note in the cricket that went on to a ceaseless roar from the multitude was the note of conflict, harsh indeed. Almost, one says, but not wholly. Scourging though the fight, one cricketer there was to remind us of the grace which is the game's very soul. Sutcliffe's bat made sweet curves, and, like the true artist, he was aware of the beauty he was fashioning. The contrast of his batting with the dominant unloveliness of the morning's action moved one romantically; it made one think of the jewel in the toad's head.

The Lancashire bowlers got their first taste of blood after half-an-hour's work, Holmes attempting to cut Cook's fast ball and sending it into slip's hands. And from then for some gruelling ninety minutes onwards no other satisfaction came to Lancashire. In a stand for Yorkshire's second wicket Oldroyd and Sutcliffe added 92 runs, playing with a confidence that put the crowd into a state of blessedness. Yet it cannot be said that the batsmen, any more than the bowlers, were ever masters: the issue was dramatically even

—one got the sense from the play now of a violent tug-of-war, the rope taut, with no man giving ground at this end or that.

A solitary boundary hit came in the first hour. Cook's bowling had matchless length: in sixty-five minutes he bowled 13 overs, 5 maidens, for 20 runs and 1 wicket. The Sheffield roar went into the sky as Yorkshire reached the first hundred, after some hundred minutes' toil. Lunch-time was nigh, and vast appetites eager for it, when a disaster fell on Yorkshire which turned to vanity the crowd's thought of meat and drink. Oldroyd pushed a ball to the off-side, and to every Yorkshireman's dismay Sutcliffe dashed down the pitch. Stung to madness he was by the very imp of mischief that pricked Makepeace to ruin on Saturday. Oldroyd did not budge an inch, and Sutcliffe saw his wicket broken far away behind him—in sad perspective indeed must his wicket have looked to him, for he was in Oldroyd's crease when the stumps were broken. A Lancashire man witnessed Sutcliffe's unhappy downfall with mixed feelings—it provoked gladness because a dangerous Yorkshire stand had been ended, but sorrow also at the sight of so much grace trapped in a snare.

Sutcliffe batted for two hours and a half. He is one of the most artistic professional batsmen in the country. Forward play is his main game, and he manages it with an elegant thrust of the left leg, the most easeful swing of the bat, with the wrists putting polish on the stroke at the penultimate second. There is indeed a pretty little flick of his bat at every stroke's end: it is the artist's way of expressing delight in work well done—one sees it and thinks of Dickens's flourish of a signature, Whistler's vain but charming butterfly. Sutcliffe perhaps is wanting the power necessary to handle an attack drastically and so win a match. But amongst defensive batsmen he stands apart; he gives Utility

coloured feathers to preen. The score at lunch was Yorkshire 138 for 2. In the two hours and a quarter's play of the morning the Lancashire bowlers sent 57 overs down, including 17 maidens, for 110 runs. In this time only nine boundaries were hit.

From the first ball after lunch Roy Kilner was leg-before-wicket to Richard Tyldesley. Rhodes and Oldroyd added 44, then Rhodes was caught, fourth out at 182. Seven runs later Oldroyd fell to a cunning ball by Richard Tyldesley, and, with Yorkshire's total unchanged, Robinson was leg-before-wicket. Thus in quick time the game suffered yet again one of those convulsions which strike fire out of a lover of cricket. We had all imagined the play in the morning strenuous enough, but soon it was apparent we had been living in a place becalmed. For the match waxed fit for the fighting gods. The two sides set teeth grimly in a struggle for a first innings lead—for points that might well have a critical value. As Norman Kilner and Wilson bent low on their bats the pot started a-boiling. One seemed to feel the heat of the antagonistic fires that were setting it in motion. The batsmen were plucky and attacked the bowling. Runs came from cracking bats, and the roars of the crowd were like the wind in the woods on a wild day. It was war to the knife now; art and method were not heeded by batsman or bowler. Nothing but naked conflict mattered in this hour: grit and brute strength were pitted openly against grit and brute strength. Surely cricket has never been played more fiercely than these rivals played it at this period; surely it has never had its airs and graces so ruffled!

For three-quarters of an hour the pace of the game was too giddy for eyes to follow. One got only an impressionistic picture of it—bowlers scowling and heaving themselves at the wicket; bats handled drastically; fieldsmen agitated and awry; snicks through consternated slips, tak-

ing your breath away; heavy thuds to the boundary. And all the time a packed mass of 26,000 Yorkshire folk turning the sunny afternoon into Bedlam. Madder and madder went the speed of the match. The batsmen were getting on top by sheer desperation and quick eyes. And suddenly the Lancashire fielding went to pieces. With Yorkshire's score 237 happened one of the craziest kettles of fish ever witnessed in the cricket field. Kilner and Wilson got into a muddle over a run and discovered themselves in the same crease. Blomley, the Lancashire stumper, had the ball in his hand and needed but to throw it to the other end to run Kilner out by half the length of the pitch. But as Kilner dashed down the wicket confusion fell upon Blomley, who, instead of sending the ball through the air after Kilner, rolled it along the grass, like some old gentleman on a bowling green. Kilner stumbled, but none the less he got home in time.

The howls of the crowd as Kilner fled to his crease, the ball following him, were the howls of the furies. Never, indeed, has one known a crowd so explosive as this; never has one known on a cricket ground such noise as this crowd made at every ball bowled. The passions of the mob passed like hot fluid through the ranks; it was a Shakespearean crowd in the sudden changefulness of its emotions. Cheers greeted a good hit; mockery fell on the fieldsman that bungled. In the Wilson–Kilner stand Parkin's bowling was punished severely and the crowd taunted him. And when at last Parkin gave way to Cook and the batting went into comparative quiet again, the crowd shouted: 'Put Parkin on! Put Parkin on!'

The seventh Yorkshire wicket fell at 244, Kilner falling to a magnificent catch by Hallows. At tea Yorkshire's score was 263 for seven. Forty-five were needed by Yorkshire for a first innings victory when the game went on. Macaulay

and Wilson played capitally, tackling the bowling with true Yorkshire pugnacity. The total reached 283 before Macaulay was caught on the leg-side. Dolphin, next man in, hit a lusty on-side boundary; Wilson, still playing a resolute game, cut a ball from Richard Tyldesley through the slips for four. At 296 Dolphin fell in Richard Tyldesley's leg-before-wicket trap. One Yorkshire wicket to fall and a dozen wanted. Waddington came in now as calm as a master batsman. 'Put Parkin on!' again moaned the crowd. Kenyon arranged and rearranged his field, and trusted to his length bowlers.

Cook went at it with all his heart; Richard Tyldesley controlled his leg-break with amazing steadiness. Still, the batsmen persisted; seven overs they withstood, and at the finish of them Yorkshire were 306, one run behind. Tyldesley now got himself ready to bowl at Waddington; the Lancashire field crept close to the wicket. And the crowd got itself ready to roar out Yorkshire's victory to the world. The ball which Tyldesley at length bowled was slow, well pitched in the air, and so spun as to break away as it hit the turf. And how did the man Waddington play it—Waddington, who had so far been all composure, all confidence? He jumped recklessly out of his crease, missed the break and was stumped. The match so far was Lancashire's. At the vision of this lunacy of Waddington's the crowd did not believe its myriad eyes. It had been ready to move Sheffield with a shout of triumph; its pent-up breath passed out of its ranks like air from a pricked bladder. A silence fell over the field more significant even than the loudest of the afternoon's thousand ear-splitting noises; it was the silence of men and women sick at heart through hope outraged.

Much of the anxiety Lancashire passed through during the afternoon was of the team's own making. Good fielding would have put an end to Yorkshire's innings long before

the race became neck and neck. After the fall of Yorkshire's sixth wicket the fielding fell into slovenliness. An easy chance of stumping given by Oldroyd when he was 34 went begging. Wilson was missed in the slips with his score 21. The frenzy of the crowd seemed to upset the Lancashire men badly. Before lunch the bowling had all-round excellence; in the crisis during the afternoon Richard Tyldesley alone, and perhaps Cook, kept a cool head. Parkin was a big disappointment, and it seems as though this Sheffield crowd will be the death of him. Three years ago he bowled against Yorkshire at Bramall Lane and had no wickets for 99. This afternoon 74 runs were hit from his bowling, and again his wickets were none. Thus his record at Bramall Lane is none for 173. Yet before lunch to-day he bowled really well, and at least one catch was missed from him. James Tyldesley on the whole possessed little length or direction. Cook was mainly his own steady self. But had Richard Tyldesley not been present Yorkshire might easily have left Lancashire a hundred behind. He bowled all day with the coolest art, using his leg-break with the nicest judgment and keeping a length astonishingly accurate for a bowler with his spin.

The stormy day—the stormiest the writer has ever known at cricket—proceeded to a calm end, with Hallows and Makepeace putting confident bats to the Yorkshire bowling. As the crowd beat up the dust on the homeward journey at close of play one felt a touch of disillusionment somewhere. And if I have written of the crowd in this account almost as much as I have written of the cricket itself, my excuse must be that the crowd acted a considerable part in the day's play. It was, indeed, the villain of the piece.

OUR VERY PRECISE YOUNG MEN

At Lord's during the last two or three University matches old men have walked about the field moaning to one another that young men nowadays are not as young as young men used to be. 'Why don't these boys hit the ball?' asked the old men. 'Why don't they play as we played when youth was hot in our blood?' Well, cricket is a living art and so it is expressive of the Time Spirit. Young men, maybe, are to-day different in mood and mind from young men of the roaring times of old, when Pendennis would sit with his feet on the mantelpiece and read Paul de Kock and shout, 'Bring it right in!' whenever he heard the man with the ale from across the way knock at his door. Do they read the like of Paul de Kock at the universities in these times? Are not Freud and the psychological novelists the fashion there at the moment? Cricket at the Universities nowadays is certainly not the cricket of swaggering 'bloods'; whatever else it lacks it does not lack brains. Indeed the trouble with University cricket just now is that introspection disturbs the game overmuch: it has the tentativeness which is the mark of the subtle mind. It is the cricket of men fond rather of analysis than of action, of men who like to look scrupulously all about them before taking a decisive step—cricket, in a word, not at all out of keeping with the attitude of mind which it is rumoured our young men are cultivating to-day; cricket which, like the stripling in the anecdote, cries in some disillusion: 'Blasé—blasé, and at eighteen.'

Possibly our young cricketers ponder the theory of the game more than is good for them. Only think long enough about the mysteries of spin and swerve and you will dis-

cover a dubious problem in every ball sent to you by the bowler. Ponder more than well the intricate adjustment and readjustment that goes on in the muscular organization as you alternately play forward and play back, and the thought of all the complications may overawe you to immobility. Supposing Jessop had examined meticulously his astonishing method: might not the thought of the hair's-breadth between his pull-stroke and ruin have stayed his giddy course? It is indeed significant of much that in a period which is more attentive to the theory of cricket than ever it was, young players are said to be growing less audacious. The giants of old—Grace, Hornby, Richardson, Briggs, William Gunn—did not strike you as men from whose eye shone the light of intellect; they were children of the sun and wind and grass. Nature fashioned them rather than artifice. Compare, indeed, the conversation of an old cricketer and a cricketer of these days; the one is content with broad issues and gusto, the other is all for the fine shades. Look at the literature of cricket in the 'eighties and at that of the moment. A. G. Steel's essay on bowling, which was printed in the 1880 issue of *Badminton*, is good schoolboy thinking in comparison with E. R. Wilson's brainy masterpiece in the latest *Badminton*. Pass from 'W. G.' on batsmanship to D. J. Knight on the same subject in his excellent little book, and you pass from an easy fresh air to the dim study. 'Theory, dear friend,' said Mephistopheles to the student, 'is grey, and green the golden tree of life.' Are our young cricketers at the Universities less students of cricket than pedants of cricket? Is style for them a conventional and a punctilious thing? One saw them playing a long-hop now and then at Lord's last season with the left elbow immaculately up, playing it ever so donnishly, as who should say: 'Maybe a Bill Hitch would indulge in a "swipe" at this same long-hop, but we prefer

to comport ourselves correctly and stylishly.' There is about the batsmanship of these young men that self-effacing sameness which happens in any activity as soon as style is looked on as something possessing a fixed character—as soon as it is regarded rather like a fashionable dress, accepted as 'the thing,' to be put on by everybody who wishes to be anybody. There has always been a tendency for cricketers to think too narrowly upon the meaning of style; nine times out of ten when they speak of a batsman as stylish they have in mind somebody who plays forward, elbow up, left shoulder pointing down the wicket, somebody whose favourite strokes are cover drives. But, as a fact, there is no single style in cricket which is *the* style. The style is the man—one simply has to drag in Buffon's now commonplace thought once again. All these batsmen were stylists—Maclaren, Ranjitsinhji, Spooner, Trumper, R. A. Duff, Shrewsbury, Lucas, and Walter Read. And not one of them played his game after the manner of the others. They all expressed in cricket themselves, their own private and immortal souls, using bats as great artists use fiddles, paint-brushes, and pianos. Hirst was a stylist in the best sense; nothing was there in his play that did not fit in with his character. Every one of his innings was autobiography; it almost told you what his politics were. So with Maclaren. Once you had seen him at play, masterfully putting balls to the boundary—nay, he *dismissed* them from his presence with a wave of an imperial bat—you knew the man. Would one not have got the shock of a lifetime after witnessing an elegy in batsmanship by Shrewsbury to discover Shrewsbury in his private existence inclined to be a loud Rabelaisian fellow? Shrewsbury, though, was just like his cricket. And Parkin, wherever he may be and whatever his activity, is like his bowling—snapdragon, whimsical. Brearley bowled like Brearley; Quaife is not a Mr. Boy-

thorn who roars a gusty way through his private life; while C. B. Fry in every big score seemed deliberately to be turning his mind and spirit inside out for the world to look at. All of these stylists, all true to themselves.

Style in a present-day University match? Why, here is batsmanship used, you would swear, to conceal the cricketers' thoughts. Most of the young men are like batsmen turned out of a mould; most of them do 'the accepted thing' at the wicket. The 'semblable coherence' which Falstaff abhorred is here. 'Why, their spirits are so married in conjunction with the participation of society that they flock together in consent, like so many wild geese.' For the most part University cricket in big events has of recent years been cricket of men 'crammed' for the match. Shall we shortly be having a Chair of Batsmanship at the Universities? One is not tilting, of course, at thoughtfulness in cricket; no cricketer ever achieved greatness by the drinking of old sack and sleeping on benches after noon. But theory need not be drilled and braced in Spanish boots; the science of the game is flexible, and in it are principles which will accommodate the most diverse tastes and temperaments. Jessop in his way was just as true to the theory of cricket as Hayward. No doubt the war must be blamed for much of the hot and strong forcing work that young men are being put through to-day by the Dr. Blimbers of Cricket. A lot of leeway had to be made up when the game was set in action again in 1919. And as Armstrong and his men rode roughshod over our cricket fields in 1921, the cry went up for aid from our Universities. Young cricketers there, indeed, were driven into high seriousness; they were led to suppose the nation's destiny at cricket depended on them. It was a panic cry. There are yet Yorkshire villages where lads play cricket on rough lands and think of nothing so much as of the great fun of the game—and out of these vil-

lages England will find in time another Hirst, another Rhodes. And in all the quiet places of our land where cricket is in the people's blood the good work is going on. University cricket gave us a Woods, a Jessop, a Foster, a Jackson, in the days when its heart was as happy as its head was strong. Care, that killed the cat, might easily kill University cricket altogether.

J. W. HEARNE

HEARNE, of course, is one of the great men of cricket to-day. More than that, he is one of the few men in the cricket of our time who would have been great and looked great at any period in the history of the game. First and foremost he is a batsman. And unmistakably he is a Lord's batsman. Nature has a happy way of giving to the art of some master cricketers a spirit that nicely expresses the different counties and setting in which they pass the bulk of their days. Hirst was Yorkshire through and through; Bobby Abel's batsmanship had the perky, Cockneyfied air one expects round about Kennington; even Ranjitsinhji's cricket was out-and-out Sussex 'by absorption,' as Harry Lauder used to say; the tawny colour of Ranji's batsmanship was in its right place in sun-brown Sussex. Even S. M. J. Woods was only an Australian by the sheer accident of birth; essentially his play had the breeze and vigour of the West Country; he gave us Somersetshire cricket; he was the Squire Western of cricket. So with Woolley; he is ever telling you of the gracious fields of Canterbury and Tonbridge, even when he is on the blasted heath of Bramall Lane.

At any rate Hearne is definitely of Lord's; the *hauteur* and the polish of the place are in his batsmanship. And to see him at his finest and truest you must go to Lord's on a June afternoon. The spirit of Lord's is incarnate in him as he moves an unhurried and elegant way there to a century. Let the afternoon be hot, with the austere pavilion ashine in the light, and the trees beyond the Nursery End incredibly still. On such an afternoon think well upon your own sweaty condition, poor mortal that you are, compact unmistakably of flesh and blood. And then behold Hearne and your senses will go cool as though in the presence of marble.

Aristocracy transcends the common need for perspiration, and Hearne's play never perspires. It is eternally as glossy as any top-hat in the pavilion. Refinement has expelled workaday nature out of Hearne the batsman. There is about him, as he makes his runs, something impersonal—that detachment which we have come to associate with the classic style. His face is a mask and his movements are so deliberate that you might well imagine there is no nerve or muscle in him not utterly subject to the will—the will to be as divinely formal as in this rude world a man may. Never does he seem to get surprised into an unpremeditated step—for him there surely is no such thing as reflex action. One, indeed, might ask, watching him bat: 'Has this inscrutable cricketer really got in him none of the moist and variable humours known to the rest of us?—is there in his blood not one of those animal spirits which, as Tristram Shandy tells us, stir themselves suddenly like hey-go-mad and drive men to excess?'

His technique is a triumph of conservation of energy. Rarely does he need to use vulgar force for the making of a boundary hit. The main portion of his strokes suggests he has thought deeply about what might be called the geometry of deflection. He seems to know exactly from which point he must bring his bat to direct most balls to the farthest edge of the field without aid of energy of body. He steers, or persuades, a ball along a course predestined, so to speak, by its flight through the air after the bowler has let it go. Rarely do you see Hearne *forcing* a ball—sending it in a direction that flatly contradicts the direction given to it by the bowler. As one has said, he is a master of deflection.

This is a science which has its weaknesses. For happy exhibition it depends on true wickets, where a man can reasonably foresee what course a ball will ultimately take after leaving the bowler's hand. On sticky wickets, where

bowling behaves as though some capricious imp were inside the leather, this science of deflection stands a good chance of getting confounded. When the turf is full of guile, the quick-footed drive which hits the ball on the half-volley is the specific—and Hearne is no master of the quick-footed drive. A stroke so clearly belonging to primitive batsmen, to the rude elements of cricket has, quite properly, no place in the equipage of Hearne, immaculate son of Turveydrop that he is. But we are not bound to insist on this limitation in Hearne's art; as we have agreed, he is definitely of Lord's. And Lord's, understood rightly, means a smooth lawn of turf on a golden day. Let the sticky wicket be relegated to Bramall Lane or Old Trafford, for the sticky wicket is like a return to nature—'nasty, brutish, horrid,' in the philosopher Locke's language. At Lord's nature is expelled, not by so coarse a weapon as a pitchfork, but by the chaste bat of Hearne. (Yet even at Lord's nature *will* come out—in any of Hendren's cricket when he is faithful to himself.)

And, after all, Hearne is himself human at bottom. He has plainly found that his superbly bred batsmanship tends to become much too fine and good for daily food. A revolt from chastity has happened in him—as we can tell as soon as we consider him as a bowler. Does he bowl as he bats—in terms of clean, balanced outlines? He does not. His bowling, in truth, is in mood and technique at the extreme of the mood and technique of his batsmanship. Heaven bless us, he is a googly bowler, flagrantly upsetting the principles of the classic bowlers' craft! Here's a paradox!—as Edward German sings in *Tom Jones*: a cricketer who walks by reason when he bats and by faith when he bowls. He must be a first choice for an England XI for a considerable time to come, because of his skill, and because he stirs the imagination in the way a Test match cricketer ought to do.

A NOTE ON CHAPMAN

WHEN Chapman played for the Gentlemen in 1920, though he then made but a score or so, he was written down as an England batsman of to-morrow or the day after. For a while Chapman, true, did not uphold this promise; judged by the test of averages he was a failure in 1921. One or two cricketers had the sense to see that Chapman's mistakes in this period were the mistakes of a batsman in whom spirit was stronger than craft. The impulse of genius often comes before mastery over technique has been established: Chapman suffered many a fall, just as a fresh-born bird does—but with the same excuse. He knew he was destined to soar sooner or later; he felt it in his young blood.

In 1921 Chapman could boast but a tiny band of friends with faith in him, and the writer was soundly taken to task by one of the oldest and most experienced umpires in cricket for suggesting that Chapman had greatness in him, despite his failures.

> 'Your makers of quite new men, producing them
> Had best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem
> The wearer's quality.'

Chapman in 1921 was spendthrift while yet lacking the dower experience brings; but the next summer saw him come into his own. At Lord's in the University match he made a century against an indifferent Oxford attack, and a few days later he made another against the Players, carving a way to glory out of the finest professional bowling in the land. In this innings his play was hailed even by old judges of the game—those jealous guardians of the fame of ancient days—as the best left-handed batsmanship displayed on an English cricket field by an amateur since the days of F. G. J. Ford.

In Australia, critics were able to appreciate the fine points of Chapman's art, for in Australia left-handed batsmen have set up illuminating standards. Hill, Bardsley, Ransford, and Darling have all exhibited superb left-handed batsmanship in recent years. Yet even these cricketers hardly spilled a brilliance of Chapman's lustre. Hill and Bardsley, indeed, must be classed with the utilitarians. They fought by the rule of arithmetic; even their most masterful cricket seemed to have in it the canny Australian nature. Darling touched heroic poetry at times, but he knew little of the joyous cavalier mood of Chapman; Darling at his most challenging was a Titan, struggling with odds and scattering them by a strenuous act of energy. Ransford's play gave us a sense of the artist's satisfaction that the end of beauty as well as the ends of utility were being served, but it was not so rapturously youthful as Chapman's.

Here we are at the crowning glory of Chapman's cricket —it is the cricket of youth. He looks the young cricketer all over—tall, sturdy, pink-cheeked, and fair of hair. He goes to the crease like one in search of adventure. The good ball that baffles him and just misses his wicket does not dismay him; he invariably has a smile for the bowler, and larger impudence for the next ball.

He has rarely given us a game more in keeping with his nature than his little innings of 48, made in the North *v.* South match at Manchester the other summer. He was always up to mischief, like some scamp of a schoolboy. Barratt from Notts, knowing no doubt of Chapman's love of playing wantonly at off-balls, bowled fast outside his off stump to a field containing no fewer than five slips. The charm of this innings of Chapman was that he would not be dismayed by the sight of those five crouching slips. He met Barratt's challenge in the happiest and most adventuresome heart; once, twice, thrice he jumped at Barratt's bait,

flashed his bat at the flying ball—and gleefully eluded the slips.

None of us could grumble because this innings was not flawless in execution. Cold perfection is no ideal for a rosy young man like Chapman to pursue; for him, who has youth nipping sharp in the blood, an innings must needs be a big adventure, with every stroke an escapade. This is not to suggest that Chapman cannot achieve beautiful and skilful batsmanship. Of course he can. The point is that his finest strokes are just as spontaneous, just as impulsive, as his bad ones. He does not achieve a perfect hit by taking more thought than he takes when he blunders into a mishit; good, bad, or indifferent, his cricket is a quick, unpremeditated expression of the youth in him, and he comes by his beautiful strokes, just as he comes by his indiscreet strokes, simply because beauty and indiscretion are the proper accompaniments of youth. Some day Chapman will grow up into one of the most finished batsmen in England; but for my part I would have him remain a boy for ever.

COOK OF LANCASHIRE

(1924)

Cook has toiled for Lancashire longer than any of us care to remember. A portly man he is, blown up like a bladder, as Falstaff said of himself, with sighing and grief—Cook's sighs and grief having been provoked by the spectacle of catches dropped from his bowling and stumps missed by inches. How he hangs his head on one side and looks the picture of hot frustration as the umpire pretends not to have heard that frantic 'H'at!' of his, which everybody but an umpire is bound to hear a mile away. The crowd, with its usual instinct for the characteristic point about a man, says Cook is unlucky. There must be some truth in this; at any rate one seldom sees a wicket falling like a gift from heaven into Cook's hands—he has to work and perspire for most of his summer's successes. If a batsman should give a chance that some fieldsman all thumbs puts to the grass, you can be certain Cook is the bowler. It is the way of the world—the honest toiler is not wooed by Fortune; she prefers to wait on coxcomb genius with its pride and peacock feathers. Cook, of course, is clever, but somehow the man's capacity for hard work strikes you even before his skill. Besides, Cook has a likeable amplitude of flesh—and cleverness owns a stark leanness, hardly making for fellow-feeling. A Rhodes, a Trumble, stirs you to admiration by calculated art; Cook wins your affection because there is about him nothing that is not Nature's own making—Cook was surely fashioned on the green grass by wind, sun, and rain. He is not subtle—hard labour never is. His bowling is as old in its ways as the hills, being quite without the tricks of the moment. Years and years ago bowlers were getting bats-

men out exactly as Cook to-day gets them out—by length and accurate aim. You may even say of Cook's art that it is as ancient as your grandfather; you could not make a finer compliment to it. If Alfred Shaw came back to our cricket fields this summer he would discover a few matters startling to him. Parkin would not please him always, for Shaw was a stickler for perfect pitch. 'Many things there are in your modern bowling that strike me as flat blasphemy,' we can easily conceive Shaw saying. 'But Cook belongs to the faith we old 'uns were born in.'

That ancient faith insisted on length, direction, and natural and not excessive spin. The greatest of these was length. There was no 'mystery' bowling in Shaw's time; the batsman knew well enough the sort of ball he had to counter. The old bowlers trusted their simple arts absolutely; with honest technique they challenged honest technique in the light of open day. There is not always this technical self-sufficiency in modern bowling: a Parkin, for example, will come by a lot of wickets by balls frankly indifferent—considered in the strictly technical sense. Parkin, as I have said before somewhere, is the Artful Dodger of cricket; his success depends largely on your not knowing exactly what is up his sleeve. How different is it with Cook. His bowling is as open-hearted as the man himself; every time he moves into action he might well say, like the old lady in Dickens: 'I will not deceive you.' When Cook is at work with Parkin you have in captivating contrast two extreme types of man's mind and character—Parkin, the artist, playing cricket mainly for self-expression; Cook, the craftsman, intent on his duty, on making himself worthy of his hire: Parkin, the Romantic, a lover of strangeness, the adventurer ever; Cook, content, with old and safe ways of doing things—no speculation in his eyes: Parkin as wayward as Fancy; Cook as consistent as prosaic fact.

To speak of Cook as a sort of Falstaff of cricket—as some writers have done—is to see no more of him than his flesh. Cook may be called Falstaffian only in so far as he would most certainly confess to an alacrity in sinking; but he has nothing of Falstaffian wit. Wit implies some sort of masterfulness, and Cook's great attributes are perseverance and fortitude, for which attributes masterfulness has no use. Cook is the honourable old servitor all over, performing his work skilfully, but modestly, and even humbly. We have seen how sturdy is his faith in the old-fashioned bowling; he is old-fashioned, too, in his belief in sweaty toil. The greatest lover of honest nature that ever lived was Chaucer, and he would have taken a 'heavenish' delight in the sight of Cook's noble capacity for perspiration:

> 'I joye for to see him sweat,
> His forehead dropped as a stillatorie.'

It would be easy to give here impressive statistics in evidence of Cook's valuable cricket for Lancashire. But no lover of the game in Lancashire can be in need of such evidence—besides, statistics will never reveal the truth about Cook. They go by results, and Cook is the last man in the world to be judged by results. How could cold figures, percentages—'Damned dots,' as Randolph Churchill called them—tell of that tireless endeavour which is Cook's great virtue, whether he is getting wickets or not? Why, one of the biggest-hearted performances of his career was at Lord's against Middlesex, but statistics have only this unedifying way of making a record of it: 'Cook, 54 overs, 12 maidens, 150 runs, 1 wicket.' Yet Cook's bowling in that match was beautiful enough to remind Mr. Sydney Pardon of Attewell and Shaw. Hour after hour in scorching heat Cook pitched the ball a rare length and stuck to the weary task of waiting for Hearne to waver in vigilance. It was a typical Cook performance; one in which the man's patience in travail was as

admirable as his rare skill. That skill of Cook's must not be underrated, of course; the fact that his sterling industry stirs in us almost a moral approbation must not make us forget that in his own school Cook has been one of the best bowlers of his time. He has, as we have on occasion seen, made one of the soundest judges of cricket think of the classical masters of length. At his finest, Cook is two bowlers in one—a man for sticky grounds and a man for perfect grounds. With rain and sun about he is not far removed from a Schofield Haigh; he can serve out a nasty break-back from round the wicket. On a fast turf he can make excellent pace from the pitch, and he has the ability to swing away from the bat, and that without using the over-tossed length which so many bowlers require before they can give some slight swerve to the ball. He has probably bowled fewer bad ones than any other cricketer of his time —not even excepting Rhodes, whose acquaintance with the half-volley is not small.

Cook, of course, like all honest Englishmen, loves his grievances. Do not allow his rubicund face to get you thinking he is ineffectually genial—a soft-mannered man suffering misfortune daily without a kick! No; Cook has been given by nature a grand capacity for a lusty 'grouch,' as protection against the slings and arrows. 'Tha's got a fine edge on thi bat,' he will tell the cricketer who has led a charmed life in the slips against his bowling. I know no story about this superb Cook of ours more characteristic than this. One summer Lancashire played Derbyshire at Chesterfield. I was unable to watch the match, but the papers said that the wicket was bumpy and most unfavourable to batsmen. Anyhow, Parkin and Cook bowled unchanged through the first Derbyshire innings, and Parkin took 7 for 15 and Cook 3 for 15. In the second innings Parkin had 7 for 58 and Cook 1 for 56. At Sheffield, the day

after this match, I picked up the Lancashire XI and saw Cook straightway. 'Good match at Chesterfield,' said I; 'it must have been a brute of a wicket.' 'Oh, I don't know so much about that,' Cook replied, in a tone suggesting he was getting tired of a world which is always misunderstanding things; 'it were only bad at one end.' Good old Cook! some day you will enter your heaven, a place where the pitch is after your own heart at both ends; a place where you will bowl with the wind at your back eternally; a place with plenty of varnish on the stumps; a place of infallible fieldsmen and of umpires that are not a little bit hard of hearing.

MAKEPEACE AND HAMBLEDON

NONE of the little boys who walk down the Warwick Road on sunny mornings, eager for a front seat at a Lancashire match, will be able to remember the time when Makepeace did not go in number one for Lancashire. Indeed, most of these little boys had still to be born when Makepeace took his first walk to the wicket for the county. That happened in 1906, and Maclaren walked with him. What a foil the dour Makepeace then had! Maclaren and Makepeace going into the field for Lancashire were as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza among cricketers—Maclaren ready to tilt at windmills, his bat a chivalrous lance, and Makepeace stubborn and canny, with no romantic nonsense about him—a shrewd fellow, biding his time, confident that patience and diligent service will bring him at last a batsman's kingdom.

He has been in the Lancashire side, has Makepeace, for even more years than the records show—only his name was Barlow at one moment and Albert Ward at another. Through him, as through Barlow and Ward, a tradition has been expressing itself—the great stonewall tradition. You must see to it that you have one man at least on your side with a cool head and a wide bat. And no cricketer in our time has so completely given you the image of the authentic stonewaller as Makepeace. No; the term 'stonewaller' is not to be taken as a term derogatory. A great part for a cricketer to play is the Stonewall Jackson part; it is an heroic part, if you look at it rightly—the Atlas of the side; and on the days when he toils for his team alone, with his companions' wickets falling all about him, his are the affecting labours of Sisyphus. The great point about Makepeace's play is that it links him up with the stonewalling masters of old, for Makepeace is not only a cautious batsman, but, despite his

utility, a pretty batsman. Makepeace slow and dull?—it is simply not true. Watch him as they watched cricket in the olden times—that is, with eyes that could notice the quieter graces; with eyes that had not lost keenness for delicate light and shade through looking at the vibrant sun of a Hobbs's art. The Hambledon men spoke of cricket as nowadays it is rather rarely spoken of. They did not insist on the brilliance of the game or on the excitement of it. They did not even care that cricket went its ways in a slow and dignified movement. Cricket for the Hambledonians was first of all a stately game—John Nyren called it 'the elegant and manly game of cricket.' The Hambledon men spoke not so much of prolific batsmen—as we of to-day do—as of pretty batsmen. Imagine a modern batsman, an exponent of the two-eyed stance, making his strokes and at the same time balancing a top-hat! Most certainly it would fall off as he hopped on one leg to dab at a half-volley. But Makepeace could carry the old tall-hat throughout his longest innings, for he has the old-time elegance, if any living cricketer has it.

Makepeace, surely, had he been dropped from some Time Machine into the midst of the Hambledonians, would not have seemed of an unfamiliar species to them. They would have recognized in him, as he put his left leg out to the ball in forward play, bone of their own bone. Could you say that much of any other living batsman? Think of the fine scandal on Broadhalfpenny Down had a Macartney one day started to play an innings. 'Aye,' we can imagine the old men saying, "tis all very fine and large. He be as proud as a Lucifer, but there be wickedness in his work. Lookee, sir, how he do be cutting they balls from off'n the middle stump; that be right blasphemous, and sin against the law.' Yes, Hambledon's head would have shaken at Macartney and his fine flying in the face of the orthodox, while for

Makepeace many a 'Pretty, pretty—tich and turn!' would have gone out from the company. Makepeace, indeed, is one of the few batsmen of our period who puts his trust in the ancient faith that it is easier to play out at a ball where one can see it, if one will only watch, than to play back. Nowadays the rule is: 'Go back unless you can drive.' The argument of the modern batsman runs much as this: 'The forward stroke is speculative—one does not actually see the ball at the moment the bat hits it. The stroke is made at the flight. Therefore the classical forward stroke is safe only if the bowling follows along the line of flight after pitching —the very thing a fellow cannot take for granted at all in these days of googlies and wrong 'uns. Yes, better go back, making the ball a shorter length so that the spin might work off and become hittable.' Curious that Makepeace, the man who is Caution in the flesh, should hold on to the ways of speculation! One often wonders what the G.O.M. of cricket would have had to say about the latter-day distrust of forward play. Speculation, indeed! 'What is the best way to stop a break-back, Dr. Grace?' a young cricketer once asked the Champion, who replied promptly: 'Why, my lad, put the bat to the ball.' And if you do 'put' the bat to the ball with the left leg close to the side of it, how often are you going to miss the ball? Was 'W. G.' never able to master a turning ball that cricketers now must needs invent a two-eyed stance, and refrain from driving forward, out of fear of bowlers with fingers that can spin? Makepeace plays straight enough, anyhow; there is no hint of the two-eyed stance in his technique. Yet he is as difficult to bowl out as any cricketer playing. His greatest asset—greater this even than his straight bat and beautiful forward method—is his ability to 'see' a ball quickly while it is still in flight, to judge accurately of its length and direction almost as soon as it leaves the bowler's hand. Maybe that is why he

can use the old-time forward technique even to googlies and swerves; and maybe it is because the average batsman of the moment does not possess a quick eye that *he* is unable to use the forward lunge safely. For, of course, if one does play out before the ball has pitched, one must be sure of one's eye. 'Watch the ball,' said the Hambledon men, 'else it will ha' thee.' There is none to-day among cricketers more watchful than Makepeace.

Makepeace never forces admiration out of you; he woos it. There is the intimate charm of the antique in his batsmanship. Little of the energy that thrills does he put into a stroke, for he prefers to assist a ball towards its 'natural' direction rather than to change the course of it by motive power of his own. His footwork, which is quick and thoroughly scientific, gets him, just before the ball is on him, into the position a stroke demands. And if you are in position as the ball arrives, surprisingly little muscular effort is needed to find the boundary. Makepeace has learned most of the strokes. Of late summers he has even come to mastery over the hook-stroke—the one stroke in his technique which the Hambledonians would not have recognized. And Makepeace achieves it superbly: a quick swing on the right foot, the bat sweeping horizontally across the line of the ball. This stroke Makepeace usually shows us after he has been walking for an hour or so in the tracks of a chaste classicism; it is human nature breaking out rebelliously, as it will do, after too much cultivation. Whichever way you look at him, as artist or as man of utility, Makepeace has been worth his weight in gold to Lancashire.

A CRY FOR A JESSOP

THE other afternoon as maiden after maiden over was being wheeled up to the wicket in a county match, a spectator cried out of his soul: 'O for another slogger like Jessop!' The sentiment was excellent, but the terms it was expressed in did injustice to a great batsman. One is constantly hearing Jessop discussed nowadays for all the world as though he achieved his wonderful deeds by sheer 'slogging.' It has even been written of Jessop that he 'reduced rustic batting to a science.' All of which is so fallacious that it would be excellent to name it as such once and for all. Let any cricketer who has ever in his life been called on to tackle first-class bowling ask himself how a hitter 'pure and simple' could possibly have played the innumerable long innings Jessop played—the bulk of them against some of the finest bowlers of all time. We may understand straightway the distance Jessop was removed from the 'slogger' if we think of him, only for a moment, with Alletson or Barratt in mind. Here we have clear cases of batsmen who out and out are of the slogging order—hearty, elemental thew-and-sinew fellows, beating the wind with hammer-like bats. Now and again a Barratt, an Alletson, brings off a miracle —actually finds the ball every time he lets go at it in a headlong primitive foray. Most days in a summer, though, he is easy game, blind as a bull at a fence, and a Rhodes or a Trumble will ensnare him in quick time—a wink to deep long-off, a tempting half-volley, a convulsion at the batting crease . . . and somebody on the boundary is tossing the ball from one hand to the other as our 'smiter' walks to the pavilion, feeling rather ineffectual. Jessop never was easy game; he was a batsman in the strictest sense, with a tech-

nique not only calculated and polished, but fundamentally grounded in reason.

Of course an innings by Jessop was invariably a sort of cyclone of batsmanship. Well, at the centre even of the wildest cyclone there is a 'point of rest,' a calm pivotal spot. So in a Jessop innings: round and over the field would its fury sweep, but deep in the heart of all the motion was the mind of Jessop, cold and rational—a mind making decisions, weighing chances, as judiciously as a Shrewsbury or a Gunn. It was the quickness of Jessop's batsmanship that deceived. Because his pace was faster by far than that of any other batsman of his time, one was always likely to jump to the conclusion that an innings by Jessop was speculative and dangerous. Had we been able to look at a typical Jessop innings with the cinema's 'slow motion' vision, we should have seen that the majority of his hits were, as Harry Lauder used to say, 'sure as death.' What if Jessop *was* fond of a cut from the middle stump?—the stroke was scientifically done, true to the ancient law. The fact that Jessop's cut frequently was accomplished from a straight ball proves simply that he was more than commonly clever at it—not that the cut itself was unorthodox *qua* cut. Jessop's cut from the middle stump was in technique exactly as it was when he cut legitimately from the off-side ball. 'If my cut is correct in mechanism when I use it to a ball *off* the wicket,' we can imagine Jessop saying, 'then it must be just as correct in mechanism when I use it to a ball on my middle stump, because it is the same stroke as far as my share in its performance is concerned. I can't help the position of the wickets going wrong now and then!' And what a gaudy hit this cut of Jessop's was: how the bowler, after thinking he had broken clean through the 'Croucher's' defence, would throw up his hands to high heaven and then cross himself piously as he saw Jessop's bat flash at the last second and

crack the ball to the boundary at a pace blinding the slips! Jessop, of course, got out from time to time through this wonderful cut from the middle wicket, but that proves nothing against the essential science that went to the stroke's making. Quaife gets out from time to time when playing forward—and you wouldn't accept that as evidence that Quaife was wanting in orthodoxy.

If you will glance at the splendid action-portraits of Jessop in Mr. Beldam's book, you will see that most of Jessop's hits were modelled on first principles. Even the huge pull with which he would take a ball from a foot or so outside the off wicket and drop it in the heart of the crowd at the on-side boundary—even that Gargantuan stroke did Jessop perform much as W. G. Grace performed it. 'Ah, but,' you say, 'Jessop was unscientific, because he would cut and pull good-length balls.' And what might a good-length ball be, anyway? 'They say Jessop hits good-length stuff,' said an All-England cricketer to me once, 'but I'll defy anybody to bowl much good-length stuff at the "Croucher" when he's on the bust!' The whole point about Jessop's methods is in that remark—he did *not* cut and carve good-length bowling. The bowling would have been good-length stuff to other batsmen; Jessop, by his marvellously quick and plastic foot-work, made it into bad-length stuff. He taught a lesson in batsmanship that surely needs to be pondered by cricketers of to-day. For though we must not lay down from the deeds of a genius like Jessop rules for smaller men to follow, we can at least grasp at the broad, sensible basis from which the genius of Jessop started to work. That good length in bowling is relative to a batsman's reach, foot-work, and style of strokes, is at least one great lesson Jessop taught—a lesson which every county batsman worthy of the name should strive to put into practice to-day. For we are getting too much cricket at the moment in which the

bowler is permitted to decide what shall be considered a good length; the bowler is permitted also to pitch much the same length to *all manner of batsmen*—tall, short, thin, and fat. And few batsmen will even try to demonstrate that this good length is illusory; that there is no such thing as a length absolute; that the pitch of a good ball must vary with nearly every batsman that comes to the crease, according to his height and general style of play. In Jessop's day a good length was bowled, so to say, only 'by permission of the batsman.' Cricketers like Jessop, F. G. J. Ford, Maclaren, Ranjitsinhji, Trumper, Spooner, R. E. Foster, A. O. Jones time after time would smash up the scheme of the so-called length bowler and remould it closer to their hearts' desire. These batsmen, consequently, were match-winning batsmen. How many cricketers to-day possess the ability to 'knock the length bowler off,' make good bowling into bad by aggressive, mobile foot-work, and so win a match? I can think only of Hobbs, Woolley, Hammond, Carr, and Fender—the last two cricketers chips from the workshop that shaped the astonishing Jessop.

WALTER BREARLEY

THE man who would write of great cricketers must look to his choice of language; his theme might call one day for prose and another for poetry, and for all sorts of prose and poetry. Dr. Johnson himself could not have weighed words with a keener nicety than a discussion of, say, Grace's batsmanship demanded, but fugitive loveliness from a Herrick is needed to tell of the poised, fleeting charm of a Spooner. For an innings by a Joe Darling—such a one as he cracked from his hammer of a bat in the Manchester Test match of 1902—let us have a little of the rolling thunder of a page by Carlyle, with smoke in the track of the sentences. And if Ranji is your theme, call on the muse that sent Coleridge his visions of Kubla Khan—the magic of the East fell in dark stains over our cricket fields when Ranji turned a bat into a wand. In the making of a pen-picture of the imperial Maclaren a minor sort of Gibbon must unloose a majesty of cadence; flashes of Meredith epigram—or reflections of them—and nothing less are likely to reveal for us Macartney as he breaks shins over the wit of batsmanship; while a large Rabelaisian vigour will blow through the book that tells the tale of Armstrong. And where is a better prose for Walter Brearley than that in Dickens which tells of the wind that roared 'Ho! Ho!' over the country-side, turned the quiet lands into places of disturbance, burst the town's gates, sent decorum head over heels, and then, a little weary of this kind of fun, scampered out to the far sea, where it met with other winds similarly disposed and made a night of it?

For Brearley was very much a great wind blowing through cricket: the imagination sees him beating up over the wide expanse of Old Trafford, raising a merry dust,

toppling wickets over—nay, surely, the sight-screens even were flung awry in the face of this gale of humanity. If inanimate objects, compact of bricks and mortar and flat earth, ever make some mystical response to the moods of man—as Dickens proved that they do—then why, whenever Brearley went on the 'rampage' at Old Trafford—why, at these times, did not the whole of Old Trafford shake in high glee, pavilion, green field, heavy roller, and all? The answer, of course, is that they did, and all the more certain is it that they did because the mind's eye was wanted to see them at it. The first impulsive stride of Brearley as he took the field with the rest of the Lancashire XI was enough of itself to whisk somebody's hat high into the air; the blusterous confidence of the man hit you smack in the face and made your blood tingle. He looked then to be taller than any of his companions, and as he moved towards 'the middle' the rest of the team seemed to be dawdling. He walked with a loose-limbed action, his body bent forward, his arms curving outwards, his fingers apart, each of them alive as though impatient to get at grips with the enemy. The vivid flesh-tints of his face, the shine of his high bald forehead—these, too, were manifestations of the rare flame that his spirit burned. From morning till night would he bowl. If he got wickets in plenty, well and good; if he, for once in a way, got not a solitary wicket, well and good just the same. 'Give me that ball, Mac,' he must eternally be conceived as saying; 'give her to me; there's strength in my right arm till the cows come home, and there's three good stumps and true to aim at.' When he was more or less quiescent in his place in the field, waiting for some other bowler to finish his over, Brearly, so one thought, chafed on a leash. 'Waste of time!' his spirit declared. 'And I could get 'em all out myself in a jiffy!'

He really believed he could; he really believed he was go-

ing to send a wicket spinning every ball. Not for Brearley the Machiavellism of those crafty fellows who decide at twenty minutes to four that they will get their men out at four o'clock precisely, and so settle themselves down to a shrewdly modulated plan of campaign. Brearley fought a new fight with each swing over of his powerful arm 'Got him—no!' 'Very well, then, next ball.' A contest between a Shrewsbury and a Lockwood might take an hour to find a crisis, the two men contending stealthily, Lockwood withholding his heaviest bolt till instinct told him 'Now's the time.' But every ball was a crisis as far as Brearley was concerned; in a conflict between him and, say, Fry, every ball scattered sparks of fresh red-hot antagonism over the field. There was no end to his energy. A day in June might easily see him begin his labours in the calm white light of the morning, go on with them after the sun had gone up the sky and sent down Ethiopic scorchings, and right through the gaudy afternoon would he toil without surcease until cool evening rippled his flannels. He was, as the crowd said, 'a worker.'

But we must be sure that we quite understand in what sense he was a worker if we are not to go wrong about the juicy personality of Brearley. Look on a perspiring fellow and say, 'Behold a worker!' and you usually imply that there's room here for a moral homily, in the Carlyle manner —you extol a devotion to duty that has the power to sustain a labourer along a path of tribulation from which he is now and again tempted to swerve. Such a moral sentiment is awakened by the sight, for example, of Cook of Lancashire bowling by the sweat of the brow. But what if hard work should look like a glad dissipation of body and spirit, as it did with Brearley? Here's another and different view of toil from Carlyle's—here's occasion for a cry from the moralist of 'Vanity. All is vanity.' Brearley wallowed in

work, indulged it out of pride of his giant's strength, out of the joy that the lusty play of thew and sinew brings, out of desire for masterfulness. No Puritan talk of the labourer being worthy of his hire will fit in with the pagan Brearley. It must remain a mystery how the Lancashire captain ever persuaded Brearley to rest and give another bowler a chance. Of him and his insatiable covetousness for glory the old story rings truer than ever it did: 'Well, Walter, shall we have a change now?' 'Yes, skipper; I'll go on at the other end.'

So far one has been getting at the nature, the personality, of Brearley. Coming to his technique, we run straightway into something apparently contradictory. For with all his riotous animal spirits, his long-legged gusto, the marks of his bowling were classic firmness of outline, classic conservation of energy. All of us have seen a wood fire in the open air blown by the wind into wavering lights; then suddenly a calm has come, and upward a single intense line of flame has shot—a spear of fire. Something like this happened the moment Brearley started to bowl: a calm descended over the turbulence of him; his mind was fixed on the offensive act, force was concentrated and expelled as though through a vent. He has as short a run as Mold. He would first take a stride to the left and then move inwards to the bowling crease along a graceful curving line. There was no leap at the wicket—only a free continuous 'run through' and a full rotary sweep of the arm. His pace through the air was fast without quite achieving the velocity of a Kotze or a Knox, and his pace from the ground was faster still. His length rarely wavered from the accuracy of the old masters—he had no need to pitch short to make a ball rise awkwardly and rap the batsman on the knuckles, for his action was beautifully high. Like most of the great fast bowlers, he depended mainly on pace for his conquests,

though on occasion, with a new ball, he could combine with speed a difficult swing away from the bat. Now and then he would deliver a ball from the outside of the crease, making his direction take an inward line of flight to the wicket, and by this expedient he created the illusion of a break-back. The break-back proper he did not bowl frequently, though it was bound to occur from time to time because of the nature of his swing over, which had enormous body action in it.

Admirable points in a fast bowler are all these, of course, and yet a man might own them and miss greatness by a long way if also he does not own Brearley's consuming passion for conquest, his confidence, his will to power. His was the faith that moves mountains, and the heavier the obstruction in the way, the more vehement his determination to shift it. The big occasion found him exultant; in Yorkshire matches wickets would fall to him like yellow corn to the sickle. And they say the name of Brearley was graven deep on poor Victor Trumper's heart.

Brearley could not bat, but how he enjoyed his walk to the wicket! He went in last, and Old Trafford was never tired of laughing at Brearley's way of leaping over the pavilion gate, bat in hand, and racing to the 'middle' as though afraid that if he didn't hurry up he would be too late for any sort of innings at all. The Old Trafford crowd has insisted on a comedian in the Lancashire side, when it is batting, ever since Briggs created the part. Parkin is now in Brearley's motley, though he wears it with a difference—he can bat when he will. But not even Parkin has a larger love of fun than Brearley. Is it not scandalous that Nature should have rendered so everlasting a spirit as Brearley's slave to the faltering flesh, that a day should have come that discovered him as perishable in wind and limb as any Tom, Dick, or Harry among us? But there waits beyond the Styx

a happy hunting-ground for cricketers—a place where it is always summer; and there Brearley will be able to bowl for ever at a wicket defended by 'W. G.,' the greatest batsman of them all against fast bowlers.

1923

THOUGHTS IN THE RAIN

(Summer, 1923)

THE wet has made our cricket fields into places of quiet melancholy. Down on the grass falls the rain, turning green a fresher green, while birds move quickly about the pitch where in yesterday's sun a conquering batsman went his way. Think of the hot pages bad weather has torn from cricket's history, think of the great batsmanship Smith most certainly would have displayed to the world had it only kept fine—for have we not always had Smith's own word for it on dreadfully wet days that these were just the days on which his very bones told him he was going to be especially brilliant? A wet day in the cricket season, we can be sure, washes out many a magnificent episode. It might easily have rained at Chesterfield from morning till night on a certain two days in 1898. If it *had* rained then, would we to-day be believing anybody telling us that Brown and Tunnicliffe once were possessed of the power to score 554 for the first wicket? On these two days in Chesterfield in 1898 Brown and Tunnicliffe performed a prodigy of skill and endurance never before and never since conceivable. Fate put apart one little period amongst cricket's hoary years for all this mightiness to be accomplished. Brown and Tunnicliffe had fine weather for it—but it might have rained. Oh, the valour and the cleverness washed out by an English summer!

But without remorse for these lost magnificences, the rain it raineth every day. A faint mist covers the field, and here dwells the most pensive silence in the world. Maybe a noise comes of somebody walking through the great hall of the pavilion—a cricketer who, even in moist, unpleasant weather, will not stay away from the beloved place is look-

ing at the prints and portraits on the wall. They are faded, some of them, and tell of the days when cricketers were frequently men with black beards. Here they sit, grouped by an ancient artist of the camera, whose notions of the picturesque were ambitious; some of them sit facing you, arms folded aggressively; some recline at ease; some look eastwards far out of the picture; and one at least of them smokes a pipe, hinting at Victorian manliness. They are lovable relics of a time that seems to-day to have been rather exquisitely young in its ways. One smiles affectionately and not at all for superiority's sake at the old portrait of the wicket-keeper taken 'in character' behind authentic stumps with a vast expanse of lakeland as a background. These aged prints provoke, for the cricketer of fancy, all the fragile sentiment which comes with the thought of time that has gone, of greatness now dim, of happy spirits whose days in the sun are over. It is in the solitude of rainy days that a cricket field and a cricket pavilion seem to have a personality, a presence; it is in this period of quiet that whisperings from olden times may be heard.

In some such mood as this I walked from a deserted cricket field and came upon a waste of common land outside. The rain had stopped, and here I discovered cricketers who had obstinately declined to abandon play for the day. These cricketers were small boys, enthusiastic despite wet, ragged clothes. Of bricks piled unscientifically one on top of the other was the wicket made, and round it the combatants raged furiously. There was the complicated ceremony of 'tossing for innings' going on. A decrepit bat was flung high into the air, wherewith one boy called out 'Flat!' another 'Round!' The bat fell to the earth with a decisive thud, the face of the blade pointing upwards. And so the boy that had called 'Flat!' picked it up and got himself ready to play an historic game. One mode this of tossing

for innings when it is only Wednesday and an urchin's Saturday penny is a long way off. The boy who went in first took up a position in front of the wickets, thrust out his left leg dramatically, flung back his head and shoulders, and stated in a loud voice: "Obbs!"—the attitude confidently assumed as likely to be indicative of England's greatest batsman in a punishing mood. His companions did not receive at all æsthetically this act of characterization; one of them snatched at the ball a second in advance of the rest, who, finding themselves frustrated both as batsmen and bowlers, hung round the crease plainly with one hope and one hope alone burning in their breasts—the hope that Hobbs would fail utterly. A boy stood behind the wicket with an old coat in his hands, and used it to stop the bowling Hobbs failed to smite. He did not announce that his name was Strudwick. He merely cast irony, along with his companions, at Hobbs. Laughable it all was, of course, but not ridiculous. For one looked on recollecting that in the county pavilion, a few moments ago, one had seen among the old photographs on the wall a picture of Blythe, the beautiful slow bowler of Kent. And was not Blythe himself found by his county on a waste of common land, uncouth and no doubt romantically aping the heroes of his boyhood? The boy who claimed he was Hobbs possibly got nearer to the true cricketer's heaven than many a county man that goes about his play content to get out of it just the amount of safe utility that efficiency guarantees. Not long ago Hearne and Hendren, in a match against Cambridge University of all teams, used pedestrian bats on an easy wicket; they played the familiar professional game. Could they but have seen and felt themselves Hearne and Hendren, as our urchin sees and feels them every day, what thrilling cricket Cambridge might have experienced! The small boy's hero-worship of cricketers is a happy matter for the

game. Surely the warmth of it is communicated in time even to the canniest of those canny fellows whose every innings is so much hard labour worth a decent wage. Surely the cricketer is a better man for the knowledge that little boys are in his thrall, that wherever he may be, whether in his own county or miles away from home, little boys are talking about him, wishing him well, sad when he is out of fortune, happy when he is playing a great game. A boy known to the writer used to pray at nights in the summer for a century by Tyldesley. And so anxious was he about his hero that he would offer up his prayer in terms explicit: 'Please let J. T. Tyldesley make a century (100) for the Lancashire County Cricket Club against Yorkshire County Cricket Club to-morrow, 6th August (Bank Holiday), 1902.' You see, he wished Providence to be under no misapprehension about the time and the occasion on which the century from Tyldesley was desired; every assistance was given in order that beneficence might not be misplaced, that a mix-up might not get the heavenly guidance somehow bestowed on George Hirst instead. Does the professional cricketer sometimes forget he is a god in the eyes of countless small boys? Else why does he frequently go about his play with so little spirit that the admiration crowed out to him by the young faithful moves one sadly at times, like devotion offered up unsuspectedly in a deserted shrine? But this is a sophisticated thought of which none but those with mature years could be guilty. To small boys the professional cricketer can do no wrong; he is a hero to them even when he plays back to a half volley with his heart in his mouth. And whether he has made a hundred or nothing, his autograph is priceless. Abolish autograph-hunting on our cricket fields? Banish little boys from the proximity of county cricketers? Then banish the young heart and romance; banish the world.

J. T. TYLDESLEY

In July, 1895, a young cricketer, playing for Lancashire against a strong Gloucestershire XI, batted with an assurance that moved W. G. Grace, in his position at point, to paternal interest and approval. 'Eh, eh,' commented his high voice, 'he's a good lad, and when he learns to play with a straight bat he'll do.' The young cricketer, though he never learned to play with the straight bat (it wasn't in his line), became one of the greatest professional batsmen we have ever had. 'What's his name?' asked Old Trafford on that July day. 'Ty'des-ley, Tyl-des-ley, Ty'd-dle-sley?' The progress of this cricketer to a popularity with the Old Trafford crowd far beyond that ever known by any other Lancashire player was marked by the changes in the name the crowd knew him by, each change denoting a more and more intimate notion of him. First it was 'Ty'd'sley,' then 'J.T.T.,' and finally 'John Tommy.' He became one of the county's common possessions—institutional. 'Mornin', Johnny,' somebody would say to him as he stood at his place on the boundary, and when he let it be understood by a glance over the shoulder that Familiarity had not gone out to the winds over his head, then Familiarity preened itself and said to the multitude around: 'Nice feller.'

A lot of people, it seemed, knew him very well—met him on the train from Monton every morning and even went to the same barber's. He really was everybody's business. Mature men, working at grey cloths in George Street on hot afternoons, used to ask, on hearing Lancashire's score was 157 for 5: 'How's Johnny gone on?' A great man does not come to this kind of easy familiarity with average folk unless there is nature as well as art in his achievement. Nobody on the sixpenny side ever shouted right from his

heart, 'Hello, Charlie!' at C. B. Fry, or 'Hello, Willie!' at W. G. Quaife. Art or high skill refined these cricketers out of the tracks of simple comprehension. Tyldesley was even cleverer than these two batsmen, but his play had in it no austerities, no alienating refinements. His was batsmanship of a sort the average man would cultivate if he could. Technically, of course, Tyldesley's cricket touched an excellence rare even amongst the masters; it is the spirit of his play that is being discussed at the moment, and that was democratic enough—his was batsmanship 'a fellow could understand.'

A cricket bat, indeed, can look an entirely different instrument in different hands. With Grace it was a rod of correction, for to him bad bowling was a deviation from moral order; Ranjitsinhji turned a bat into a wand, passing it before the eyes of the foe till they followed him in a trance along his processional way; George Hirst's bat looked like a stout cudgel belabouring all men not born in Yorkshire; Macartney used his bat all for our bedazzlement, as Sergeant Troy used his blade for the bedazzlement of Bathsheba—it was a bat that seemed everywhere at once, yet nowhere specially. And for Tyldesley a bat was an honest broadsword—a broadsword drawn in no service but the service of Lancashire. This last sentence is not intended as a rhetorical flourish. If we are not to go wrong over the character of Tyldesley we need to know that for him batsmanship was first and last a means to a workmanlike end, which was Lancashire's welfare. The brilliance of his play often blinded us to Tyldesley the canny utilitarian. Art for art's sake was not his cry; his play took the senses by assault, inflamed the imagination, but certain it is he never set himself deliberately to do this. To say the truth, we are at liberty to remark of this wonderful cricketer, who was perhaps the most skilful, the most audaciously inventive batsman of his

time, that his philosophy is contained in: 'Be good in service and let who will be clever.' He shed glory over the field unwittingly. A bird that is attending to the hard utilitarian job of building a nest will move us to the artist's delight by poise of swift curving flight. And an innings by Tyldesley, though moving on wings and enrapturing the senses, was always attending to the utilitarian job of building the Lancashire nest. What was an innings of a hundred to Tyldesley if victory did not come to Lancashire along with it?—the man was mocked; the taste of ashes was in his mouth. This, of course, is not the way of the artist. *He* can thrive on an individual achievement because of the wonder in it. He lights his fire that he and others may be ravished by colour and fine flame; he does not insist that it be capable of boiling the pot. Tyldesley was certainly not an artist in this deliberate, proud, selfish way. Remember his dourness as he stood over his bat ready for the bowler's attack. He was the image of antagonism, vigilant and shrewd. Tyldesley never seemed, even in his most sparkling innings, to be toying with the bowlers in the manner of the virtuoso, merely to amuse himself and us; he most plainly was checkmating them by courage and opportunism. If he was audacious that was because audacity 'paid'—offence was his best means of defence. He improvised strokes never seen before on the cricket field, not out of the artist's love of doing things in a new way, but because inimical circumstances could not be thrust aside by the old expedients. When he tried a fresh stroke he asked if it 'worked,' not if it was 'artistic.' We all recollect his slash stroke, that uppercut over the slips' heads. It was not beautiful to see, but immensely fruitful of runs. Had it happened in an innings by Spooner it would have looked like a flaw in a delicate piece of porcelain. But how in keeping the stroke was with the punitive game of Tyldesley!

Again, take his on-driving: he had no objections to lofting the ball, so long as it was lofted profitably. The batsman who is an artist before he is a cricketer has a fastidiousness which is set all on edge, so to say, at the very sight of a stroke 'off the carpet.' Tyldesley had no such compunction. Nor is his lofty on-driving to be taken as evidence that after all he was more than the canny utilitarian, that he liked now and then to live dangerously for the good of his spirit. No; when Tyldesley sent the ball into the air he knew exactly what he was doing; he was not snapping fingers at Providence, nor indulging in quixotry. It is doubtful whether Tyldesley ever hit in the air during a big match out of sheer high spirits. Perhaps the field was set inconveniently for grounds hits; very well then, they must go over the heads of the scouts. He could place the ball almost to a nicety. So with his famous cut from the middle stump. Surely, you might object, this stroke was a piece of coxcombry—a display of skill for skill's sake, or, at any rate, a display of skill intended to astound us. Why should it have been? The cut was Tyldesley's master-stroke; he had it under perfect control. 'But,' you may still object, 'why from the middle stump?—nothing canny about an adventure like that.' You may be sure Tyldesley did not cut from the middle stump without a good workmanlike reason. Bowlers knew that he would cut to ribbons anything on the off-side at all short, and they would in consequence keep on or near Tyldesley's wicket. Was Tyldesley then going to let his cut go into disuse? Was his most productive hit to run to waste? Why should he not cut a short ball on the middle stump? Let him only get into position for it—his foot-play was quicker than the eye could follow—and it was much the same as a ball on the off-side, made for cutting. Of course if he missed it the chances were that he would be out. Well, he weighed the chances against his marvellous ability at the cut, and the

risk was not palpably greater than the risk a cricketer takes in playing any straight ball—either defensively or offensively.

Macartney used to cut from the middle stump—but for a reason different from Tyldesley's. Macartney would exploit the hit even when it was in his power to make another and safer and even more profitable stroke. For Macartney, though a good antagonist, was a better artist; the spoils of war became in time cheap and tawdry to him. Often did one see disillusion on his face at the end of an opulent innings. Then would he find the challenge of the best bowler irksome: he would throw discretion to the winds in a way that a sound tactician like Tyldesley never did. To refresh his spirit, to save himself from the stale and the flat, Macartney was ready to risk the profitable—to indulge in some impossibly fanciful play of the bat. In this hot quixotic mood his wicket would go to the simplest ball. 'Macartney gets himself out,' was a common saying. How seldom one heard that much said of Tyldesley. A bowler had to work for the wicket of Tyldesley. You might baffle him by skill, inveigle him into a false step; never could you hope that he would give himself away. He wore the happy-go-lucky colours of the care-free soldier of fortune, but they were as borrowed plumes: in the flesh Tyldesley was a stern Ironside, with a Cause—the cause of Lancashire—so sacred that it demanded that a man cast the vanities of art and self-glorification to the wind. This most dazzling of all Lancashire batsmen was, forsooth, a Puritan—a conscript of conscience even, trusting in Lancashire but keeping his powder dry!

There lived not a bowler in his time that did not suffer the scourge intolerable from Tyldesley's bat. Rarely was he to be found not 'ware and waking—on a sticky wicket he was as formidable as on a dry one. At the Oval, or at Edg-

baston, his happy hunting-ground, the bowler all too soon would behold Tyldesley's wicket as a wicket a long way distant, his bat a sword of fire guarding it. 'Heaven help me!' the sweaty toiler would appeal to the sky. 'If only he would let one go! I don't ask for his wicket—I've been flogged out of vanity like that—but merciful power can surely grant me a maiden over now and then.' Maiden over, indeed, with Tyldesley in form! He would plunder the six most virgin deliveries you ever saw. It was hard even to pitch a decent length to him. For he knew, unlike the modern batsman, that length is not absolute, but relative to a batsman's reach. And though Tyldesley was a little man, his feet had the dancing master's lightness and rapidity of motion. He covered a larger floor space as he made his hits than any batsman playing to-day—not even excepting Hobbs. What a disdain he must have in these times for the excuse of timid batsmen that they must needs practise patience till bad bowling comes to them! How long would Tyldesley have required to wait for half-volleys from J. T. Hearne, Trumble, Blythe, Noble, and the rest? He turned the well-pitched bowling of these masters into the length a punishing hit asks for by swift foot-play. He would jump a yard out of his ground to make a half-volley; he would dart back to the wicket's base to make a long-hop. Two old cricketers once discussed an innings by Tyldesley after the day's cricket was over in something like this language: 'Tha's a reight bowler, Tom. What's thi analysis to-day—after Johnny'd done wi' thi?' 'Nay, Bill, be fair—tha can't deny I bowl'd well. It wer' t' wicket were too good; I couldn't get any spin on t' ball.' 'Spin, eh? I likes that. Spin on t' ball? Why, I never saw thi hit t' floor all t' afternoon.'

He was in possession of all known strokes, and, as we have seen, he improvised strokes of his own when circum-

stances challenged him to do so. His square-cut was powerful, and the action of it has been vividly described by C. B. Fry: 'He threw the bat at the ball without letting go of the handle.' Many a day-dreaming point—they needed a point, very deep, to Tyldesley—has been seen hopping agitatedly after the advent of the Tyldesley cut. Sometimes he went on his toe-points to make this stroke. His driving was accomplished by a vehement swing of the bat and a most gallant follow-through. There was no saying whether forward or back play was the mark of his style, he combined the two so thoroughly. He was perhaps the best batsman of all time on a bad wicket. P. F. Warner is never tired of singing the praises of Tyldesley's innings of 62 made on a 'glue-pot' at Melbourne in 1904. England's total was then 103, and Relf was the only other batsman to get double figures.

A great batsman is to be estimated, of course, not merely by his scores, or even by his technique, but also by taking into account the quality of the bowling he had to tackle in his day, and the quality of the grounds he mainly played on. When Tyldesley came to greatness English bowling was in a classic period; he had to face men like Lohmann, Richardson, Peel, J. T. Hearne, Noble, Jones. But not only did he take his whack out of some of the best of our classical bowlers; he was also one of the first batsmen to master the new googly bowling. He passed, in fact, through all the manifold changes in fashion which came over bowling between 1903 and 1919. And whether it was J. T. Hearne or R. O. Schwarz, Rhodes or D. W. Carr, Tyldesley was always the same brilliant and punitive Tyldesley. Then let us bear in mind as we do honour to his genius that half of Tyldesley's cricket was played at Old Trafford, where in his time the wickets were not above suspicion. What would Tyldesley's record have been had he played mainly on the hard, beautiful wickets of Kennington Oval? But Tyldes-

ley himself never would worry his head over the averages and records, nor need we. His service was all for England and his county—given in happy devoted heart. Think of him as brilliant if you like, but also think of him as modest —if you would keep the idea of the real Tyldesley in mind. The man is by nature as discreet and modest as few geniuses ever are, and that modesty and discretion, as one tried to show, came out even in his most flashing play. Once, in the days when cricketers were asked by a London newspaper to write reports, Tyldesley was the historian of the Lancashire XI. And he wrote his accounts very much in this style: 'Yesterday we had the good luck to get Worcestershire out cheaply, thanks to some good bowling by Mr. Brearley and Dean. When we went in the wicket was faster, and Mr. Maclaren and Mr. Spooner, batting finely, gave us a good start. Sharp did well too, and Mr. Poidevin had the misfortune to play on after a promising beginning. I also managed to get a few.' And turning to the scores you would read:

A. C. Maclaren, b Wilson	41
R. H. Spooner, c Arnold, b Wilson	31
Tyldesley, not out	200
L. O. S. Poidevin, b Arnold	16
Sharp, b Burrows	20
Extras	10
Total (for 4 wickets)	318

The real Tyldesley peeped out in his cricket writings—and he never played an innings that was untrue to his nature.

TWO WONDERFUL BOYS

HAS the game ever known two schoolboys who announced all round genius more eloquently than A. G. Steel and J. N. Crawford? Some of the old men who sit in the pavilion, and as they look over the field, now and then seem to be looking again into a remote past indeed—some of these may be able to name a boy they knew who was better at all the points of the game than Steel and Crawford; but the writer has not heard of him. Grace, of course, was top of the English averages at the age of sixteen, but he never bowled in the great bowler's way. C. L. Townsend, when he was seventeen, bowled beautifully for Gloucestershire, but his batting then had no uncommon distinction. F. S. Jackson did not develop into a great batsman till his third year at Cambridge. C. T. Studd was twenty-two when he scored 1,000 runs and took 100 wickets in a season. But Crawford achieved the 'double event' at the age of nineteen, and Steel was top of the English bowling averages at nineteen—his record 164 wickets at 9 runs each—and a year later he was fourth in the English batting averages, above Scotton, Lucas, Ulyett, I. D. Walker, and A. J. Webbe.

The great point about these boys is that while still at school both might well have played for England. Crawford led the bowling averages for the country in 1904, with yet a year to serve at Repton, and he played for England in South Africa in the winter following his last summer at school. Steel did not win international honours till he was twenty-two, but that was because not till 1880 did an authentic Test match between England and Australia happen in this country. We have the authority of W. J. Ford

for believing that Steel was never better as a bowler than during his last year at Marlborough.

Crawford as a boy bowled medium pace and Steel slow to slow medium. There, as far as the bowling of the two boys goes, similarity ends. Steel had a most ample bag of tricks, including both the off- and the leg-breaks. Crawford never, to the writer's knowledge, broke from leg. He relied on a rare off-break and pace variations. As batsmen the two boys were fashioned in the same mould, or perhaps it would be better to say, out of the same stuff. Each was a masterful maker of runs, eager to take the offensive. Steel did not have Crawford's lovely stance at the wicket; he crouched a little, and Mr. R. H. Lyttelton has put down this inelegance to Steel's lack of really good eyesight. Crawford also lacked a naturally good vision, but he had the sense to play cricket in glasses.

But better, perhaps, if we now look at these prodigies one at a time. Steel's first dose of first-class cricket came to him in 1878, as a member of the greatest of all Cambridge XI's, which contained these cricketers: A. P. Lucas, A. Lyttelton, E. Lyttelton, H. Whitfield, D. Q. Steel, L. K. Jarvis, A. G. Steel, F. W. Kingston, Ivo Bligh, P. H. Morton, and A. F. J. Ford. This team played eight matches, including one against an Australian XI, and won them all. Steel headed the batting averages of this superb XI, his innings worth 37 each, and took 75 wickets at an average of 7. In the same summer of 1878 Steel, a youth of nineteen, bowled for Lancashire against Yorkshire and helped himself to 14 wickets for 112 runs. The story got about that Tom Emmett, when he heard Steel was playing for Lancashire in that match, said to his companions, 'Let's go home, lads; Steel's playing, and Yorkshire's beat!'

One does not often hear mentioned the most wonderful point of all about Steel's cricket. This, surely, is that he

could as a boy attain to mastery in just that kind of bowling which needs to be deployed craftily, with a profound insight into the niceties of batsmanship. A slow left-handed bowler may do well as a boy—as Rhodes did—and cause no out-of-way problem, for the reason that the left-handed bowler starts with an advantage given to him by nature over the right-handed batsman. His line of flight comes into the batsman awkwardly, and the 'break away' is in strong contrast to the line of flight. The slow right-handed bowler starts with no such natural advantage; his line of flight is pretty direct to a right-handed batsman. Most of the great slow bowlers have been left-handers—Briggs, Blythe, Peel. Slow or even slow-medium right-hand bowlers usually require the strategy that is only got from long service in the game, before they cause great trouble. But young Steel tossed his slows along to some of the greatest batsmen that ever lived, and never was it easy for them to get him on the half-volley, despite that, with youth's own audacity, he over-pitched rather than under-pitched. There was a famous occasion at Old Trafford when he 'teased' Shrewsbury to the stage of making Shrewsbury look undignified. He tossed the ball higher and higher into the air, dropping it in the crease almost. Yet Shrewsbury regarded every delivery as though the ball had an imp of mischief inside, and declined to move his bat unwarily. Steel was the perfect example of the 'tricky' bowler, getting his men out by bluff as much as by the technical quality of his bowling. Can ever a boy have played the game with an older head than Steel's on his shoulders?

Steel's batting in his prime was masterful. His averages hardly tell how great he was as a run-maker. He got himself out almost as often as the bowlers. His confidence was genius's own: he seemed to assume as a matter of course superiority over the best bowler. He did not content him-

self, as your modern batsman does, with waiting for loose balls. In his day loose balls were not as prodigally sent along as they are to-day. Steel, in form, hit the bowling when it was on the wicket, and when it was not on the wicket he went after it, and hit it as soon as he found it. The innings he played at Lord's in 1884 for England against the Australians is to this day talked over with some ecstasy by the old 'uns who saw it. The bowlers were Spofforth, Boyle, Palmer, and Giffen, and they might well have been blinded by the white light that Steel spread about him as he hit his flashing boundaries. W. G. Grace once said of Steel that he should never forget the 'cheeky' way Steel laid about the Australian bowlers. He had no qualms about jumping out of his ground to Spofforth's notorious slow ball and banging it to the edge of the field. Not that he was a reckless hitter; the pace of his batsmanship was swift because he was master of every stroke and quick and light on his feet.

J. N. Crawford, it may seem, has no bright prospect in a comparison with Steel. Yet the writer can hardly believe that even Steel was a better batsman than Crawford at his best. It may be said Steel made runs brilliantly against greater bowlers than ever Crawford had to face, but Crawford has the right of answering that that was no fault of his. In form, he made the bowlers he *had* to tackle look so helpless that they might easily have been twice as good and still not have escaped punishment. Perhaps the writer, in suggesting that Crawford was as good as Steel as a batsman, is dazed yet by the splendour of an innings of Crawford's he saw played against the Australian Imperial Forces XI of 1919 at the Oval. Gregory was in that Australian side, and a more formidable bowler then than he was in 1921, save at Trent Bridge in the first Test match. At the Oval in 1919 on the occasion one has in mind Gregory bowled a tremendous

pace and repeatedly broke back. He 'went through' four Surrey batsmen, including Hobbs, for a score or so of runs. C. T. A. Wilkinson stopped him bravely for a while, and then Crawford came in and flogged the fast bowler as surely fast bowler was never flogged before. The innings was incredibly brilliant. Gregory was driven straight as though he were bowling lobs. His short 'bumpers' were most dramatically hooked to the boundary. The last Surrey wicket that afternoon scored 80 runs, and Crawford made 78 of them in fifty minutes. In all he batted for two hours and ten minutes, scored 144 not out, and hit two sixes, one five, and eighteen fours.

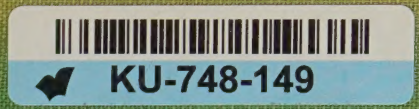
None but a master could have played this innings. Yet, brilliant batsman though Crawford was in this country—like Steel he had only himself to blame for many a brief innings—Australians declare that it was in their own country that Crawford's genius as a batsman really came to the flower. Crawford's career with Surrey ended in 1909, and he went to Australia. There he played for South Australia, and his batsmanship was written down by Australian judges of cricket as the most brilliant since Trumper. Mr. Warner has said Crawford was a greater batsman in Australia than he was here, and he ought to know, for it was against Mr. Warner's 1911–12 team that Crawford played, at Brisbane, an innings of 110 against Rhodes, F. R. Foster, Barnes, Woolley, Hearne, and Iremonger, and batted a mere hour and a half, put even Barnes in a little way, and drove two sixes and fifteen boundaries. Crawford probably had not as many strokes as Steel, but his driving, especially his straight driving, can hardly have been second in combined power and precision to the driving of any orthodox batsman in the records of cricket. His style had, with all the fury of his hitting, an exquisite forward poise; his power came from a driving mechanism that worked in perfect time, not from

excessive muscular effort. The writer can speak from experience of Crawford's driving. He played against Crawford when he was at Repton, and even then, though a frail slip of a boy, Crawford put a force into his hitting that made the field lively indeed. We took a sort of pity on Crawford that day, when he first came in to bat; he looked so little like a cricketer, what with his slender body and his spectacles. And for a while we bowled 'nice ones' to him. Then we got tired of charity and unloosed our heaviest batteries. And the faster we bowled the farther young Crawford smote us. There was genius in his every movement at the wicket.

Crawford probably cannot stand discussion as a bowler in the same breath that discusses Steel's bowling, but that is only because Steel was a bowler in a thousand. Crawford certainly stood in the front rank of the bowlers of 1904–9, and certain it is that we have few bowlers to-day as good as Crawford at his best. His wonderful break-back he could make bite even on the pluperfect Australian wickets. This amazing spin he got by holding the ball with the second finger, as well as with the first, giving 'purchase' to the ball. With this break went a beautiful length—on his best days. His bowling in the Test matches in Australian in 1907–8 was after the grand manner. Despite the hard wickets, the heat, and the fact that he was on a losing side, he took 30 wickets at 24·70 each—this against batsmen of the Trumper, Hill, Noble, Duff calibre, and in their own land too. Barnes, when he was in his greatest Australian form during the winter of 1911–12, had to pay 22·88 each for his 34 wickets, and he had stronger support than Crawford. Few English bowlers have been put to the test of sterner Australian bats than those which faced Crawford in 1907–8, when he had barely reached manhood; few have had to toil on grounds more heartbreaking than those on which this

wonderful boy toiled. And few, indeed, have come through the ordeal as handsomely as Crawford did.

The old men in the pavilion are rightly proud of the cricketers who made history 'in their day.' For good reason, too, may they be jealous of the old masters' honours. But they will surely be magnanimous when they consider the genius of young Crawford, and not think that a comparison of him with the magnificent A. G. Steel is intolerably odious.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